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MEMOIRS OF PAUL DE KOCK







MEMOIRS  
OF  
PAUL DE KOCK  
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF

WITH A PHOTOGRAVURE PORTRAIT  
OF THE AUTHOR



LONDON  
LEONARD SMITHERS & CO  
5 OLD BOND STREET W  
1899

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## P R E F A C E

April 8th, 1869.

For a long time I have been urged to write my *Memoirs*; for a long time, every day, numbers of persons have kept saying to me: "You, who have known so many people and seen so many things, why don't you describe the former to us and tell us about the latter? Endowed as you are with the gift of observation, your descriptions and your tales could certainly not fail to be of interest to us."

Up to now, I have always replied to those who would have me undertake a work, from the perusal of which, as they assured me with more or less sincerity, they anticipated deriving considerable pleasure:

"No, I shall not write my *Memoirs*, and for these reasons: first of all, because I have never cared to make my own personality conspicuous in a book, and in this respect, the example afforded by Jean-Jacques himself, in certain passages of his *Confessions*, does not tempt me at all; and, secondly, because people and things that I have seen during my life, which have appeared to me capable of interesting or amusing the public, have already done

service in my novels ; so that, in describing the former again, or for a second time speaking about the latter, I should only be repeating myself, and if it be true that the maxim *Bis repetita placent* holds good in love and before a good table, it is still more true that in literature there is nothing so insupportable as those writers who, by dint of constantly draining such and such an idea, or such and such a character, end, after having extracted a white and excellent flour, by obtaining nothing but a mawkish and insipid mixture."

That is how I replied to the publishers, to my *confrères* and to such of my friends as would have me turn my thoughts towards the Past, with intent to enliven the Present ; and doubtless I had persisted in my resolution, had it not been for a conversation that I had this very day, on the Boulevard du Temple, with an old and charming author, Benjamin Antier by name, a friend of Béranger's, a friend of mine as well for many long years.

Of what did we talk, Antier and I, as we walked along this Boulevard, which formerly was so gay, so animated, so eminently Parisian, with its everlasting round of theatres, and which is now so sad, so deserted relatively, so provincial-looking, with its barracks and its square—so path-riddled, this square, that each time that one is about to cross it, one involuntarily asks oneself if it wouldn't be advisable first to make one's last will and testament? Of what did we talk? Of all that no longer exists

in Paris, and of all that we recalled to mind as having loved or admired there. Thus our conversation was long, so long that, though started at mid-day, evening surprised us as we were still at it. Events and men of every description, of every kind, for sixty years and more, all were passed under review ; a review, which at times would cause a tear to rise in the eye, but the more often, would bring a smile to the lip. By inclination, as far as I am concerned, I am but little disposed to sadness, and Antier is of the same persuasion : he prefers to laugh than to cry.

At length, as we were making up our minds to part, the author of *La Pauvre Famille* and of *L'Auberge des Adrets*—the antipodes in style—said to me :

“It does one good, doesn’t it, Paul de Kock, to look back over the past ? It makes one young again.”

“My word !” I replied, “it is certain that, whilst we’ve been chatting, I havn’t had a moment’s inconvenience from the gout, in spite of the fact that, ever since yesterday, I have been in dread of an attack. My left arm is as stiff and as heavy as a bar of lead.”

“Well, do you know, my friend,” went on Antier, “since you find them so effective for your trouble, in your place I’d make use of your recollections as a remedy.”

“Nothing I should like better. Whenever you are willing, we will continue our conversation.”

“That is not what I meant. Of course, I shall be

only too happy, at some other time, to run through the pages of our young days again with you; but what I meant to convey to you was that you, as a remedy for the gout, should write down all that you have just now related to me."

"Good! So you too are going to advise me to write my *Memoirs*!"

"And why not? if, while you are writing them, you forget your pain?..."

"My dear friend, I have said somewhere or other and with truth, I think, that if it is true that we find a great charm in recalling the past, we are also often apt to flatter ourselves wrongfully in making this charm pass to the end of a pen, whereas it dwells only at the bottom of our hearts."

"Yes! Yes! I know you! You have never troubled yourself much about Politics, therefore you won't dwell on that subject in your *Memoirs*, and that's already half the battle for your book, in an age, when—like Proteus, changing at his fancy his colour and his form—this pretentious fiend, pedantic, tiresome and hollow, which we call Politics, pursues us poor Frenchmen everywhere, and especially us poor Parisians, in the drawing-room, in the shop, in the street, in the theatre, and even in the servant's hall. As for religion, you will leave that alone as well, because, faithful to the rule of conduct you have mapped out for yourself in your novels, you will not see the necessity of ridiculing those who believe in everything, merely for the sake of pleas-

ing those who believe in nothing. And vice versa. In short, as you are not likely, I feel sure of it, to fall into the bad methods of certain authors of *Memoirs*, methods which consist in giving the most fastidious descriptions of details of private life, not uninteresting perhaps for him who recollects them, but, on the other hand, wholly unentertaining for him who has to listen to them, your book will be lively, gay, *sans façons*: a genuine Paul de Kock book, of the old school, and, as such, every one will want to read it and everyone will read it."

I smiled as I listened to Antier.

"But its almost a plan for my *Memoirs* that you are sketching for me, my dear fellow," I said to him.

"Well ! well, so much the better!" he retorted gayly. "I am lightening the task for you."

"Begin by writing down our conversation, by way of a preface ; then, taking your own time, and as you feel inclined, thrust your recollections on to paper ; as soon as you find you have sufficient to form a volume, you will take it to a publisher..."

"By the reception given to this feeler you will be able to judge whether you should start a second. Good-bye !"

Antier had left me. On my return home, I began... by dining, for it was six o'clock, and I still have the weakness, contrary to a certain publisher of my acquaintance—who purposely forgets to dine in order to husband his purse—of loving the festal board and of sitting down to it always with an appe-

tite ; but, after dinner, leaning on the balcony of my window, that window under which, for well-nigh forty-eight years, I have seen so many faces pass by, faces young and old, pretty and plain,—the plain more numerous than the pretty—I found myself reflecting on the words of my old friend.

And the result of my reflections was that I took a pen and a bundle of paper, and on that very same day, the 8th April, 1869, I wrote what goes before, “by way of a Preface,” as Antier has said.

And now, taking my own time and as I feel inclined, as he also expressed it, I am going to write my *Souvenirs* or *Memoirs*, which I will divide into three periods: from 1793 to 1815, that is to say, from the time of my birth, during the First Republic, and up to the end of the First Empire: from 1815 up to 1848; during the Restoration, the reigns of Charles X and Louis-Philippe, up to the Republic, second edition: and lastly, from 1848 up to our own time.

Under how many different governments have I lived?

Only quite recently, along with my son, I made the calculation ; it is curious :

I was born during the reign of the National Convention (1792 to 1795).

Then I lived during the Executive Directory (1795 to 1799).

Then during the Consulary Committee (1799).  
The Temporary Consulship (1799 to 1802).

- The Permanent Consulship (1802 to 1804).  
The Empire with Napoleon I (1804 to 1814).  
A Provisional Government (1814).  
Louis XVIII, first Restoration (1814 to 1815).  
Napoleon I, the Hundred Days (1815).  
A Provisional Government (1815).  
Louis XVIII, second Restoration (1815 to 1824).  
Charles X, (1824 to 1830).  
Provisional Government, General Lieutenancy of  
the Kingdom (from 30th July 1830 to 7th August  
of the same year.)  
Louis-Philippe I (1830 to 1848).  
Provisional Presidency of General Cavaignac  
(1848).  
Presidency of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte (1848  
to 1852).  
Temporary Dictatorship of Louis-Napoleon  
(1851).  
Decennial Presidency of Louis-Napoleon (1851  
to 1852).  
Napoleon III, Second Empire (1852 to 1868).  
There! One-and-twenty Governments! to say  
nothing of the *pompier* of 15th May 1848. But  
one must not be too severe, as this *pompier* was a  
government for barely four hours. Twenty-one gov-  
ernments and a quarter! That's not bad, is it, for  
a simple individual? Without counting that, at the  
rate things are going now-a-days, I am not at all  
convinced that I shall die during the one that exists  
for the moment. For, for some little time, it has

all the appearance of doing what it can to cede its place to another.

But what! I agreed not to talk Politics, and here I am, at the very outset, letting myself be carried away.

Forgive me, Reader, that will not happen again, or at the very most, that will happen only when I am forced into it, bitterly forced, as for instance, in the very first page of my *Memoirs*.

It is not my fault if the Republic, which professes to be *the government par excellenee*, and the indubitable source of happiness and joy for all, allowed me, in my cradle, to receive no more than one single kiss from my father...

Because they were waiting to lead him to the scaffold.

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## MEMOIRS OF PAUL DE KOCK

### CHAPTER I

My father, John Conrad de Kock. — The reasons why I am not a Republican. — From Holland to France. — A first Marriage. — Five Children. — Second Marriage. — A birth and a death. — A banking-house in Paris. — The Dutch refugees with the army of the North. — Dumouriez. — Consequences of the battle of Nerwinde. — The return of my father and mother to Paris. — The house at Passy.— M. Maron, Protestant minister. — Colonel Saumur.— Anacharsis Clootz. — Hébert. — Ronsin. — Arrest. — John Conrad de Kock before the Revolutionary Tribunal. — Superfluous defence. — Sentenced. — On the scaffold. — Sequestration of his goods. — Consequences of the sentence of the Revolutionary Tribunal. — Text of the inventory drawn up after his death (22 Germinal, An II). — My cradle is seized. — Citizen Anthony Ravigneau and the jewels and silver plate of a victim. — A portrait saved. — A visit from Fouquier-Tinville. — My mother threatened with imprisonment at the Abbaye Prison. — She owes her safety to me. — The Ninth Thermidor.

"Like Father, like son" is a saying which for the most part is an erroneous one. My father was a Republican, whilst I am not, firstly because the Republic murdered my father, a reason which, me-

thinks, should dispense me from giving any others, and secondly because I hold that whole nations can no more live in unity than can families. In the course of my long existence, I have not met with more than two or three families, out of a hundred whom I have mixed with, where concord reigned, where the several members were not ready to come to blows over the slightest difference, whether relating to money or to questions of vanity, and the natural conclusions which I drew from this observation were that union amongst the several members of a whole people is the most chimerical of Utopias, of dreams the least realizable.

"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." Before smearing the walls with these three words, they should be engraved on the hearts of the people.

Unfortunately, the minds of men cannot be turned to the same uses as the walls of buildings, and for a long time back envy and hatred have been taught in France to the people instead of love and charity.

My father, John Conrad de Kock, advocate at the Hague, was born in Holland in 1755. He was rich and a nobleman. I mention this latter fact, without vanity, although I admit that I would just as soon be the son of a Somebody as of a Nobody; but principally to rectify the mistakes made by Lamartine and M. Louis Blanc. Lamartine in his *History of the Girondins* and Blanc in his *History of the French Revolution* democratized my father's

name by far too much, taking such liberties with it as to spell it *Koch* or *Cock*. My father was a nobleman, as may be seen in Riestal's *Universal Heraldry* which was printed and published in Gouda in 1860. He was noble, and consequently rich and happy, and in 1787 he took it into his head to come to Paris, where already revolutionary ideas were fermenting.

As I have said, my father was one of those men who believe in "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity," elsewhere than smeared on the walls.

We shall see what his illusions cost him.

John Conrad de Kock had been married ten years when he came to France. He had had five children by his first wife, Maria Petronilla Merkus; two sons, Henry and John Peter, born in Heusden, the former in 1779 and the latter in 1780, and three daughters, Goverta, Cornelia, and Deborah. He took his two sons to Paris with him and left his daughters in Holland in the care of one of his sisters. His wife died in Paris, on December 31st, 1789.

John Conrad de Kock married his second wife, Anna Maria Kirsberger in Paris on December 8th, 1790. She was born at Bâle in Switzerland on June 14th, 1764, and was the widow of Claude Perret, by whom she had had three sons.

Of this second marriage, there were born, at an interval of two years, two children; namely: In 1791, a girl who only lived a few months. In 1793, a boy who received the name of Charles Paul de

Kock, your obedient servant.

1793 ! I was born in 1793, that is to say in the most dreadful days of the Terror, at a time when nobody, whether big or little, on rising in the morning was sure of going to bed, in the evening, with his head on his shoulders.

I was born on May 21st, 1793 and on March 24th, 1794, my father died by the guillotine.

So it must be admitted, that if I am gay by nature, and that if, for more than half a century, my indefatigable pen has never ceased to divert and amuse the public, it is certainly not thanks to the fairies at my christening, such as the old storybooks tell us about.

An unflinching patriot, my father left Holland when the wife of William V, hereditary Stadholder of the United Provinces, appealed to her brother, Frederick William II, King of Prussia, against the party called the constitutionalists. On the day when 30,000 Prussians entered Amsterdam, Conrad de Kock left for Paris.

But whilst resigning himself to exile, he had not abandoned the hope of freeing his country, and whilst waiting till France, free herself, a republican France, should stretch out her hand to the Batavian Republic, my father, who knew that one of the best ways of helping one's country is to have much gold to place at its disposal, busied himself with a view to increase his fortune and on January 1st, 1791, entered into partnership with one of the principal

banking houses of Paris, the firm of Sartorius Chockhard.

This partnership prospered, but the rapid course of events proved to my father, only too speedily, that in a time of Revolution, it is dangerous to wish to make money, even for the common good. In such times, every rich man, however generous he may be, is for the masses nothing but a pillager. The events of the 10th of August, 1792, which ended in the imprisonment of the Royal Family in the Temple—that antechamber to the scaffold—gave my father food for serious reflection. Blood had flowed like water during this day; it was still to flow in torrents, and this expectation, distressing as it was, whilst it did not induce my father to abandon his liberal ideas, prompted him to the resolution that, if he must die, his life should be given for his own country, instead of being sacrificed uselessly in France.

He accordingly dissolved his partnership at the bank, and, towards the beginning of 1793, betook himself, as one of the twelve members of the Batavian Committee, to Louvain, the head-quarters of the army of the North, in whose ranks the Dutch refugees were united in a legion under the command of General Daendels.

My mother insisted on accompanying my father, although at that time my advent was expected. M. de Kock was a brilliant talker, clever and witty, a man of remarkably handsome appearance and of

most elegant manners ; his wife was pretty and amiable ; so both were received with open arms. Dumouriez, especially, showed the greatest liking for them. A fatal friendship, which later on was one of the principal causes of my father's downfall and destruction.

Need I tell you, who, I presume, know it as well as I do, how, after losing the battle of Nerwinde, Dumouriez, feeling himself as little able to fight against the National Convention as he was to face the enemy, arrested the Minister of War, Beurnonville, and the four commissioners, Camus, Lamarque, Bancal and Quinette, who had been sent by the Convention to bring him back to Paris, and how, deserting his army, he fled for refuge, accompanied by the Duc de Chartres, to the camp of the Prince of Coburg.

A very poor way, be it said, of making good a defeat—by an act of treachery.

Be that as it may, the army of the North being defeated and scattered, and the liberation of Holland by France being in consequence indefinitely postponed, if not altogether to be despaired of, my father returned to Paris. He owned a house in Passy and went to live there with his wife, who was on the eve of her confinement. At the same time, as though under a presentiment of his fate he wished to protect from its consequences, as far as possible, the two beings who were dearest to him, he sent off his two sons to Belgium, in the charge of one of his

relations.

What has become of the house where I was born? It was destroyed, no doubt, burnt down, swept away with so many more during some popular movement, for, later on, under the Empire, when I went to look at it, I could find no traces of it, except some vestiges of the garden which my mother fancied she recognized. It was the simplest of abodes, the least likely of houses to excite the envy of the mob. My father used to receive friends there, fellow-countrymen for the most part. Van Hocq, T'hoofd, Saint-Aman, Propstein, Pastor Maron were amongst his visitors. My father was a Protestant, and had me also baptized as one. Of all those who used regularly to visit him in his house in Passy, M. Maron alone survived him for any length of time. He lived till 1833, and to the last never failed to come and see me twice a year, spring and autumn, to beg my alms for the poor, in memory of my father. I need hardly say that not once did I turn a deaf ear to these appeals.

Unfortunately, those named above were not my father's only friends. He was more or less intimate with Colonel Saumur, ex-governor of Pondichery, with Anacharsis Clootz, 'the orator of the human species,' and partisan of 'the Universal Republic,' and also used to receive Hébert and Ronsin, the two leaders of the Cordelier faction. M. Maron used to say to me of Ronsin, that 'he always looked like a bulldog in a fury.' Hébert was a little dandy, slim and elegant, who always dressed with the greatest

care and used musk, amber and pomatum in abundance. He was a charming man . . . when not writing his horrible *Père Duchesne*.

Ronsin, Hébert, Saumur, Anacharis Clootz and five or six others, wished to overthrow Robespierre, who still, at that time, was all-powerful in the Convention. Arrested in their homes, on the night of March 17th, they were taken to the Conciergerie. My father was not arrested at Passy until the following morning. Fouquier-Tinville accused him of having conspired against the Government, and especially of having been a friend of a traitor, Dumouriez. He refuted these accusations before the Revolutionary Tribunal and without difficulty.

"I am a Dutchman," he said, "and if, on fleeing from my oppressed country, I asked for shelter in the French Republic, it was in order to serve her, as far as lay in my power, with my intellect and with my blood, in the hopes that, victorious over the coalition of the Kings, she would extend to my country also the benefits of liberty. It was certainly not to take any part in her internal discussions. As to General Dumouriez, it is true that my hand has often grasped his. But at that time—can you have forgotten this?—the repeated successes of his sword made me, no less than you, believe in his patriotism. If you must kill all these who, even as I, have loved Dumouriez, the hero of Valmy and of Jemmapes, you will have to immolate more than thirty thousand soldiers."

But as everybody knows no defence held good in the dock of the Revolutionary Tribunal. The prisoner was allowed to speak for form's sake; the public prosecutor alone was listened to. My father was sentenced to death with all the rest of the Hébertists. He went to his death like the courageous man he was. He was executed the last but one, after Vincent and before Anacharsis Clootz. M. Maron was in the crowd and stood just opposite the scaffold. Before yielding his neck to the executioner, my father cast a last glance at the pastor, a glance which seemed to say: "I think of those I love. Let them not forget me."

Although I never had the happiness of knowing my father, I have never forgotten him. I have always remembered and always shall remember that he was guillotined by the Republic.

And that is the reason why I am not and never shall be a Republican. If anybody thinks me in the wrong, so much the worse for him.

It was through M. Maron also that my mother heard of my father's death. She had remained in Passy, guarded by two *sans-culottes*, waiting for the public prosecutor to decide her fate. My mother was obliged to pay these two guardians, six francs a day each, to escape the alternative of being taken to prison. Now be it remarked, that Fouquier-Tinville, who for a very good reason had no doubt whatever how my father's trial would end, had sealed up everything in our house on the day of his arrest. So,

had my mother not happened to have a few pieces of gold in her pocket, she would have been forced to join my father in the Conciergerie, being prevented from taking any of the money that was in the house.

The National Convention, I may add, was as expeditious in carrying out its sentences, as it was in getting its *dues*.

On the evening of the 21st of Germinal, the worthy Pastor Maron, braving the dangers to which all who ventured to show any interest in the "aristocrats" exposed themselves, came to tell my mother that she was a widow.

And, on the morning of the next day, one of the district administrators, came to Passy, acting in the name of the law, to draw up an inventory and valuation of the furniture, works of art, clothes and other effects having belonged to the man who, two days previously, had been sent to the scaffold by the Revolutionary Tribunal.

"What, can one inherit from him one has murdered?" asks a poet. The French Republic had no such scruples of conscience. She had not the slightest objection to pocket the proceeds of the sale of the goods of her victims.

I have before me a copy of the text of the inventory in question. I copy some pages from it, word for word, for the edification of my readers.

DEPARTMENT OF PARIS.  
Franciade District.

*Copy of the official Inventory and valuation after  
the Decease of*

CONRADE KOCK

sentenced to Death.

MUNICIPALITY OF PASSY.

22nd Germinal, Year Two of the French Republic, one and indivisible.

This day, 22nd Germinal, Year Two of the French Republic, one and indivisible, I, Anthony Ravigneau, administrator of the Franciade District, a commissioner appointed by the said Directorate, pursuant to its order dated the 19th Germinal, to betake myself to the house in Passy of the late Conrade Koc, sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal, to inspect and pass as whole and unbroken the seals previously imposed in this house by C. Gautron, Commissioner of the Department, as also to draw up an inventory and valuation of the Furniture and Effects being in the Said House and belonging to C. Conrad Koc, did in consequence of my said Powers betake myself thither on the day and in the year mentioned above, assisted by the Citizens Pierre Harivel and François Harivel, both notables of the Commune of Passy, as also by the Citizens Lelong, Expert Appraiser, and Douët, our secretary, who took the prescribed oath, and did then proceed to make an inventory and valuation of the

furniture and effects in the following Manner:

Here follows a list of the furniture, provisions, odds and ends, and clothes, from the dining-room chairs upholstered in crimson "Utrecht" velvet, down to the "Lamp in the Chinese style" and the "little Bastille under a glass globe" which ornamented my mother's bed-room ; from the barrels and bottles of wine in the cellar down to my cradle, which stood beside my mother's bed, "a small cradle with its curtains, a small horsehair mattress, a small counterpane ;" from the carriage, saddles, bits, bridles and halters found in the stable and coach-house, to the roll-top writing-table and backgammon board which stood in my father's study. The inventory covers both sides of twelve closely-written pages, of large foolscap paper, stamped with the stamp of the Commune of Paris, and the total valuation totals up to a sum of *sixty-two thousand four hundred and twenty francs*, a sum which, considering the very low figure at which each item or lot was valued (notably a hundred bottles of Champagne, which were set down at 50 francs, that is to say at five-pence the bottle), must have been more than quadrupled at the sale.

Nor were the plate and the jewelry, weighing together sixty marks, five ounces, included in this valuation. Citizen Anthony Ravigneau, 'administrator-commissioner declares that 'as to the jewels and plate, he has taken these to convey them to the Directorate of the Franciade District, that an in-

ventory thereof may be made at the said Directorate.'

O Citizen Anthony Ravigneau, are you quite sure that you conveyed these sixty marks of gold and silver whither you say? Did not a little of it stick to your fingers whilst you were on your way?

All the same, the death of the Dutchman, Conrad de Kock, was good business for the Commune of Paris.

As for me, as I read over these pages, on which in dry lines, are numbered and set forth, facing the absurd valuations, all the things which the Republic stole from my parents, it is not on the items of gold and silver that my eyes tarry with regret, but rather on such things as these:

196. Two bonbon-boxes of pale tortoise-shell, a small ivory writing-stand with pen and pencil thereto; a tablet of white ivory.

197. A lacker snuff-box; a pair of English pistols.

209. A small writing-table. Thirteen small pictures, representing different portraits.

These were family portraits, miniatures painted by great contemporary artists, marvels of art, as my mother has told me. Bonbon-boxes, ivory tablets, a table, a writing-stand, a snuff-box, which my father loved to use; pistols which he had received as a present from the Duc de Chartres, in the army of the North.

All that my mother was able to save was a por-

trait of her unhappy husband, which she concealed on her person.

That is all that the Republic left me of my father's belongings.

That was little.

The document ends as follows :

"And seeing that nothing more was found to be set down in this inventory and valuation, we have closed this our present protocol, after having busied ourselves from nine o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock at night, without interruption save and except during meal-time, and have left as guardian of our said seals as also of the furniture and effects set down in this inventory and valuation, the Citizen Gillioz, who has taken them in charge and will produce them to us whole and intact, at such time as he may be requested by us so to do, which he did after having taken the prescribed oath and having signed with us, the above-said commissioner, this our present protocol, as have also done the Citizens Pierre Harivel and François Harivel, both notables, and the Citizens Lelong, Expert Appraiser and Douët our secretary, the day and year given above.

"Ravigneau, F. Harivel, P. Harivel, Gillioz, Lelong, and Douët."

Beneath this is written :

"Registered at Neuilly, the 23rd Germinal, Year Two, fo. 51. Collection of duty deferred till after the sale.

Thibault."

Beneath this again :

"Received, the 22nd Prairial, Year Two of the Republic, thirty-six francs as fee for registering the present inventory after the sale.

Thibault."

So the sale only took place two months later, and for two months the generous National Convention allowed my mother to live amongst her impounded goods, on the condition that she should make the least use possible of them, and, above all, not wear or deteriorate them in any way. Which must have been very comfortable for her.

Let us be fair; the Convention, through Fouquier-Tinville, did more than that for my mother, and by the same token, for me, seeing that, if I had been deprived of her, it is more than probable that, as I was then only ten months old, I should have been somewhat embarrassed how to provide myself with the means of existence.

At the beginning of Floréal, or April, that is about ten days after my father's execution, Fouquier-Tinville, remembering that he had not entirely dealt with the case of the Dutchman "who had abetted the treachery of Dumouriez and had attempted to overthrow Robespierre" presented himself at our house in Passy, accompanied by three of his familiar bravos.

I have let my mother describe in the words in which she often described it to me afterwards, what then happened :

"It was one morning. I was walking in our little garden, carrying you in my arms. You were laughing, you seemed radiantly happy, because the sun of the spring was beginning to shine on the sprouting leaves, and I, I was weeping as I looked at a rose-tree which your father had planted, the previous autumn, under the window of my bedroom, happy at the thought how the perfume of its flowers would delight me, his wife.

"Suddenly, Geneviève, my good Baden servant, who in spite of all my misfortunes had stubbornly refused to leave me, came running up, pale as death.

"'Madame,' she stammered, 'there are four men asking to see you—Oh God, oh God—and I saw at once who they were; three of them are the same who came here to fetch master.'

"And so it was. Four men came out of the house and walked towards me.

"Geneviève had made no mistake. Three of them had been in the gang which arrested your father.

"The fourth, who came first, oh, I recognized him at once, although I had only seen him once or twice in Paris, the fourth was the *Public Accuser*. It was Fouquier-Tinville.

"Fouquier-Tinville, at that time, must have been about fifty. He was a thin man of middle stature, and was dressed simply but with some elegance. He took off his hat as he came up, his companions following his example, and said, with a politeness which contrasted with the vile address in the second

person singular which was then obligatory :

" 'Citizeness, our visit, I presume, surprises thee disagreeably. But, I regret to say, thou must understand that it is impossible that thou should'st remain here any longer. Thy husband has been tried and sentenced. Thou also in thy turn must appear before the Revolutionary Tribunal. And, in the meanwhile, we are compelled to conduct thee to the Abbaye.'

"To the Abbaye. Oh, well I knew for what place one left the Abbaye. My tongue clove to my palate.

"However I was able to say :

" 'And why should I go before the Revolutionary Tribunal? What have I done to be sent to prison? I, a woman? What am I accused of? Is it not enough to have killed my husband? Why should I be killed also?'

"Fouquier-Tinville, as calm as ever, was about to retort, when somebody stopped him.

"It was you, Paul, you, my darling son.

"Astonished, no doubt, at the sight of these strange faces, astonished rather than frightened, just as the terrible purveyor to Republican Justice was about to open his lips and say that, as the wife of a man guillotined the day before, I could with but ill grace refuse to admit that it was equitable that I should be guillotined on the day following, you burst out into one of those peals of laughter which babies laugh, the delicious expression of a gladness of which the secret is known to God alone.

"I trembled. I tried to hush you. I was afraid that your gaiety might displease these men.

"But smiling as he looked at you, Fouquier-Tinville said :

"Is that thy child, citoyenne?"

"Yes, citoyen."

"How old is he?"

"Ten months."

"He is a fine child for his age. Where is his nurse?"

"I give him the breast myself."

"Ah, it's thou—Ah, it's thou who—"

"Having thus repeated these words twice, Fouquier-Tinville looked at us both, for a few seconds without speaking. My tears ran. They seemed to say 'If you send me to the scaffold, what will become of my child?' You, Paul, you went on laughing. Blessed laughter, which assuredly did more for us than all my tears.

"Well, then," said suddenly the Public Accuser, speaking to his companions, "since the Citoyenne Kock has a child at breast, I don't see that there is any objection to her being left here a little while longer. Let us say, until her child is weaned."

"But," objected one of the men, "everything in this house has been seized in the name of the law. Everything here is going to be sold."

"Well and what then?" said Fouquier-Tinville. "The citoyenne will buy back her bed and the child's cradle, that's all. If she has got no money, she is

pretty enough to find somebody to lend her some. So that's settled, citoyenne. Thou shalt remain here five or six months. That will give thee time to wean thy child. *Salut et Fraternité!*

"And Fouquier-Tinville withdrew, followed by his acolytes. He walked away rapidly, it may be so as not to hear my words of thanks. The Public Accuser could listen to no words of thanks, because he had no right to show mercy.

"Yet I, after Fouquier-Tinville and his men had gone, I fell on my knees and thanked God, as I pressed you, Paul, to my breast and covered you with kisses.

"For it was to you, that in all truth I owed my life."

The fact is and you must admit it, that for a young man of ten months old, I had not distinguished myself too badly in this affair. Still in swaddling clothes, I had saved my mother's life.

And looking over ancient history, I can find few cases of filial affection which can be compared, on the ground of precocity, with that.

For my mother did not go to the Abbaye, and that means that she did not go to the scaffold. What a touch of humanity in a tiger's heart had begun, was achieved by the course of events. Fouquier-Tinville had authorized my mother to remain five or six months in Passy. Now, the third month after Floréal was Thermidor, as the Republican

calender had it, and, as everybody knows, it was on the 9th Thermidor that Robespierre and his party fell and that the Terror died the death. My mother had thus no longer any reason to fear on my account that people would come and bid her prepare for death, because I had reached an age at which I could live, even deprived of her.

## CHAPTER II

The morrow of the 9th Thermidor. — If I were a historian. — What occurred in my family. — My mother's third husband. — Head-clerk and gambler. — The Palais-Royal. — History of the first volume of an old novel. — The little old woman. — Origin of a vocation. — Why I was not sent to school. — The venerable M. Bedel. — A violin master, M. Mengal. — The tune from the *Caliph of Bagdad*. — A bale on the fifth floor. — How the good people of Paris used to amuse themselves in 1810. — The charm of meeting with strangers.

If I were what is called a serious writer—that is to say a writer who has taken upon himself to relate historical events and to comment upon them, with more or less talent and more or less impartiality, according to his literary merit and his personal opinions—it would be easy for me, by utilizing the stories told me by eye-witnesses, whom I knew when I was a young man, to write a score of pages on the events which in Paris and throughout the whole of France, followed on Thermidor the Ninth. Very sad events they were. Although the Reign of Terror was over, France, whilst breathing more freely, was no nearer swimming in that ocean of happiness which the Revolution had promised. France

had no bread. Corn had not sprouted under the rain of blood. And you know the proverb: "When there is no more hay in the manger, the horses quarrel." So instead of eating bread, people grumbled in Paris from morn till eve, clamouring for the 1793 Constitution, shouting, yelling and fighting in the streets. Now and again some aristocrat, who could not help matters, was hung up on a lamp-post.

Poor mob. It should have learned, from thousands and thousands of accumulated proofs, that it is not by killing that the best living is earned.

So, were I an historian, I should write you a history, or something like one, but I am only a novelist relating his souvenirs, and I will accordingly draw a curtain over the political events of the end of the National Convention, of the Directoire and the Consulate, and with one stroke of the pen, jumping from 1794 to 1806, from the Republic to the Empire, describe how at the age of thirteen, I felt the first aspirations to literary fame awaken in my breast.

At thirteen! There was precocity!

But I have already told you that I did not wait to be old before distinguishing myself.

Let me first give some particulars about my family. They are essential.

In 1806, it was already seven years since my mother was no longer called Madame de Kock, but Madame Gaigneau. Yes, yes, she had married for

the third time. Oh, my mother, like the heroine of one of my novels, was a *gaillarde* in the good acceptance of the word, that is to say, a woman of strong will and great intelligence. Having mourned my father for five years, my mother said to herself one day, as she noticed how I was growing, that it was not on tears that she could bring me up. One of her brothers, Joseph Kirsberger, was a tradesman in Geneva. She had entrusted the three sons of her first marriage, before marrying M. de Kock in 1796, to this brother who loved them like a father. Joseph Kirsberger was rich and sent his sister some money now and again. But it is difficult for a woman with a child to live on "some money now and again." The Republic had confiscated all M. de Kock's possessions in France, and as to the property which he had left in Holland, it was quite natural, that this should benefit his first children, his two sons and three daughters, who had returned to their native land, rather than me.

I shall speak later on of my half-brothers on my father's side, Henry and John Peter, who returned to Holland in 1793 and were adopted as her children by the Batavian Republic, for till their death, I remained on terms of affection with them. As to my half-brothers on my mother's side, I shall say nothing, as I never saw them and in fact hardly ever heard a word about them. Silence in return for silence.

My mother then married again in 1799. Her

husband was M. Gaigneau, head-clerk in the Revenue Office. M. Gaigneau had no income outside his salary, but he was a gentlemanly and amiable man and in point of age was well suited to my mother. When they married he was forty and she thirty-five. Unfortunately, my dear stepfather had one of those faults which fatally bar the way to comfortable circumstances for a family. He was as bad a gambler as Beverley.

Excellent M. Gaigneau, how often, of an evening, when my mother thought that he was taking me for an innocent walk on the boulevards, he used to leave me, all alone, waiting for him for hours together, under the big chestnut-trees planted by Cardinal Richelieu in the Palais-Royal Garden, whilst he was throwing his gold on the roulette-tables at No. 113, or No. 154. He died in 1826 and, shortly before he closed his eyes for ever, he said to me :

"Never mind, old fellow, since I have been ill in bed, I have discovered a wonderful system. You'll see. I must get well quick, and then I will make us all rich!"

I must admit that I did not at all mind waiting for my step-father in the Palais-Royal Garden. I used to play with little boys of my own age; I used to listen to the music at the door of the *Café des Aveugles*, or to the man with the tambourine at the *Caveau du Sauvage*; I used to stroll along the wooden galleries and stare with curious eyes at the

women who, fine weather or foul, walked there, always fresh, pink and smiling, with their curled locks covered over with broad *coiffes* which were pleated into large pleats, with their *caracos*, their little *casaquins* and their baskets. When M. Gaigneau had won—I could always tell it from his face—he used to stand treat at the Café de Foy, or at the Café des Mille Colonnes; when he had lost we returned home, straight as a cannon-ball.

On such occasions, that is to say when he had lost, he never failed to say to me, as we were walking along :

“You needn’t tell your mother...”

I understood what he left out, namely that he had left me alone for three hours.

I used to answer : “No, no, don’t be frightened, Papa, I shan’t tell Mamma anything.”

When he had won and in consequence had treated me to an ice or to a glass of chocolate, he never said this. He had paid for my silence and so had nothing to fear from my chatter.

Now, on one of these evenings, one summer evening, as the night was closing in and my father had just entered one of his favourite hells, I was wandering about the garden to find some mates for a game of leap-frog, when I saw under a chair at the foot of a tree, a small book in chamois-leather binding, which I snatched up and opened.

It was the first volume of :

THE THREE GIL-BLAS  
or  
FIVE YEARS OF MADNESS.

*History for some, a Novel for others.*

The whole set forth after the manuscript of one of  
the three friends, and published by

LAMARTELIÈRE.

I copy this title-page from a copy of the book  
which I bought later on, as a souvenir, and placed in  
my library. It is rare enough to-day.

My attention was first attracted by a steel plate,  
which formed the frontispiece of the volume. The  
engraving represented three young men in their un-  
derclothes who were dancing round a pile of open  
moneybags which were heaped upon the floor. Un-  
derneath was the following text:

“He makes us dance in our shirts round a heap of  
money.”

What were the three Gil-Blas? (No doubt, the  
three young men who were dancing). And where  
had they got this pile of money which seemed to  
delight them so?

Such, we will understand, were my first thoughts  
as I examined the picture. At the same time be-  
fore I ventured to begin to read the book, I looked  
all round to see if I could not find the owner of the  
book and restore it to him.

There was nobody. So I sat down on a bench  
and greedily fell to reading. I read on until it was

quite dark, and went on reading in my bedroom after I got home, until I had finished the book, without saying anything about it to my parents. Instinctively, I felt that it was not a book for little boys. How disappointed I was to find that this volume was only a part of a book. "End of Vol. I" was printed on page 181. So there was a second volume, perhaps a third and fourth. I should never know the further adventures of Charles, Frederick, and Henry, the three Gil-Blas. We had parted company as they were fleeing from Strasburg after a sanguinary duel with three insolent officers of the garrison and I was never to know what became of them! I felt so sorry that I did not sleep a wink that night. However, as it turned out, I got the whole story to read.

The next day, my father had as usual taken me to the Palais-Royal, on the customary pretext of taking me a walk on the boulevards, and had left me in the garden whilst he went off to flirt with the red and the black.

I had taken the book with me, to read it over again and—virtuous resolution—to restore it to its owner if chance threw him in my way.

Now it just happened that the owner, a little old lady, was sitting at the very place where the day before she had lost the first volume of Lamartine's novel, on the chair, under the tree in the chestnut alley. She was reading the second volume. I had but to look at the colour of the binding to see that.

I rushed up to her and holding out my find, I cried :

"This is your book, Madame, is it not?"

The little old lady looked up, and, evidently very pleased, exclaimed :

"Ah! my little friend. So you have found my book."

"Yes, Madame, I found it last night."

"And you have brought it back to me. It is very good of you. Many thanks. Now what would you like for your trouble? Sweets? A toy? We'll go and buy it."

The little old lady had risen as she spoke, but I did not budge. She was surprised and said :

"Well, won't you come? Don't you want a box of sweets, or a cup and ball, or a hoop?"

I shook my head.

"Well, what do you want?"

"I should like you to lend me the continuation of the book, madame."

"The continuation. Do you mean to say that you have read the first volume?

"O, yes, Madame, I have read every word of it and I liked it very much."

"You don't say so."

The little old lady smiled, but she seemed to hesitate about granting my request. She thought no doubt that the book was hardly suited for a boy of my age.

It would be, however, a mistake to imagine that

this novel was one of those licentious publications which appeared in such abundance under the Directoire. Although it contains some light episodes, it is on the whole as moral as it is interesting, a fact which has been admitted by our dramatic authors, who have taken from it the materials of half-a-dozen plays, as for instance, *The siege of the Bell-Tower*, which was an Ambigu success, *Fiorella*, played at the Opéra Comique and *The Blue Triolet*, at the Palais Royal.

But to return to my little old lady.

She had no doubt come to the conclusion that there was no reason to fear that that "lightness," which had at first alarmed her on my account, would do me any harm, for the reason that I probably did not understand it, and that what had pleased me in the book was not the gallant adventures of the Three Gil-Blas, but their fights, their hairbreadth 'scapes through windows and up chimneys, and their tricks and pranks of every description.

In short, she handed me the volume and said :  
"All right, little fellow. Here is the continuation.  
Sit down by me and read it."

"But you, Madame?"

"Oh, I, I've plenty of time. I'll read the paper."

"And does the book finish with this second volume?"

"No, there are two more."

"And will you lend me them also."

"Certainly. But won't you be scolded for read-

ing instead of playing. You are not here alone, surely?"

"Yes, Madame. That is, that it's just as if I was alone because... my Papa brings me here... in the evenings... but as soon as we are here, he goes off... to, to his business... and only fetches me away later."

"Ah, ah."

Did she understand what sort of business it was which occupied my father so regularly in the Palais Royal and took him away from me, and was it that that dispelled her last scruples?—A gambler's child! There was no need to practise too strict morality with him. Be that as it may, the little old lady let me read the second volume of *The Three Gil-Blas* in peace, and, true to her word, brought me, on the following days, the two last volumes which I devoured as greedily as the first.

Now did this reading have a real influence on my mind? Did it really fix my vocation? I think so, for from that day on I could never see a book without wishing to read it. Till then I had been more or less indifferent on the subject of books. We had some classical novels at home, *Don Quichotte*, *Le Diable Boiteux*, *Gil-Blas*, the genuine *Gil-Blas*, and I gave my parents no rest until they had lent them to me. To please me, my father also procured for me the works of Ducray-Duminil and Madame Cthin. Did I not tremble as I read *Victor ou l'Enfant de la forêt*, and *Cœlina ou l'Enfant du Mystère*? Did I not weep over *Malvina* and *Amélie*

*de Mansfield?* But I had less taste for tears and trembling than for laughter. *The Three Gil-Blas* had hit the mark, the gay natural style of book was my favourite style. With what joy, then, did I, three years later, read Pigault-Lebrun's *The Barons of Felsheim*. Lamartelière had pointed out the way, Pigault traced it for me. It has been said that I imitated him in my first and weakest novel, *My Wife's Child*, and that is quite true. And what writer is there whose first work is not an imitation of his favourite author? Since then, I can say with pride, I have always been myself: let the reader judge for himself. Pigault wrote from imagination, I wrote from Nature. He invented—as for me I never told anything but what I had seen.

Well, Lamartelière and Pignault-Lebrun assisting, I wrote two volumes right off the reel, when I was seventeen years old. With a common accord, all the publishers in Paris refused to print them.

But I must not anticipate. I have first to speak of the early days of my youth.

Between ourselves, they were not always very happy. I have told you that my step-father was a gambler, which means that all his earnings melted away at *trente-et-quarante* and at the roulette table. This naturally provoked my mother to outbursts of passion. Oh, when he happened to win, all went well. There was abundance of everything at home; we drank the best wines, we had the finest dinners, and we went to the theatres. My mother was very

fond of the play and often took me there. But when, at the end of the month, when salaries were paid and the tradespeople wanted to be paid also, M. Gaigneau came home with empty pockets, the house used to ring with cries which would have driven a deaf man out of his wits.

"You want my son and me to die in the gutter, I suppose, sir."

"Don't get angry, dear. I had no luck to-day, but to-morrow..."

"To-morrow! The wretch! He hasn't a half-penny left and he talks of going back to the tables!"

"But I must get my money back, by Jove. I shan't always be unlucky."

"Poor Paul, poor darling child, it's on your account that my heart's breaking. Oh, how wrong it was of me to give you this man as a second father. What will become of you Paul, since the man who ought to guide you and protect you, who ought to think of nothing but your happiness and your future, does nothing but waste his money in gambling. As for me, Paul, I feel it, I shall not be able to live this life of privations and misery much longer. My health is breaking down day by day. Rejoice, sir, soon I shall no more be here to reproach you for your misconduct. You will have brought me to the grave. To the grave, to which my unhappy child will soon follow me,—for want of bread."

M. Gaigneau did not bring my mother to a grave. He died in 1826, and she did not close her eyes in

death till 1854, at the age of ninety. A fine old age, which seems to prove, whatever my mother, widow of three husbands, might have said on the subject, that sorrows do not injure the health. And I must admit that my stepfather seemed to be but moderately impressed by the dismal picture of his widowhood which my mother drew for his edification. Not that he was a bad man, or that he had no affection for her, but one gets *blasé* in all things and perhaps my mother rather overdrew the picture in her efforts to appal the culprit. When she had screamed to her heart's content, he used to shrug his shoulders and murmur :

"What a fuss about a few crowns to the bad! But hang it all, I shall get them back, these crowns, to-morrow. All that's wanted is only a little run."

Then he would kiss me and say :

"Don't you fret, my lad. You have only got potatoes to eat to-day, to-morrow I will treat you to truffles."

My education, of course, had to suffer from the want of agreement between my mother and her third husband, and, especially, from the almost constant want of money which resulted from my father's passion for gambling. When I reached my seventh year, my stepfather took me to a little school in the vicinity, where I was assured of good treatment. My mother had strongly objected to this arrangement, for she thought me much too young

to be separated from her. During the first week all went well. I liked going to school where I found little mates to laugh and play with. But on the ninth day, whilst playing I got a bump on the forehead which swelled up as big and as red as an Easter Egg, in spite of all the bandages and pieces of five francs which the master pressed against it. When I was brought home by the servant and my mother saw me in this state, she became a lioness in fury, a woman no longer.

"I knew what would happen," she roared. "It shows that one wants to kill a child of that age when one sends it to school. My darling son! They would kill you, the murderers, the brigands! But you shan't go back, no, you shan't go back to that accursed school. Do you hear me, sir?" (This to M. Gaigneau.) "This boy is my son and I won't let him be murdered. And so he shall not leave me again."

"All right. But then who is going to teach him to read and write?"

"Oh, that's dreadfully difficult, isn't it? We'll get a tutor to come to the house, that's all."

This was a more expensive matter than sending me to school, and M. Gaigneau, not from motives of economy but out of prudence, did not care to incur too many expenses. However, for the sake of quiet, one day when the night before he had been lucky at the tables, he hunted up a suitable tutor and brought him home, having, prudently again, paid him three months in advance. He was forty or for-

ty-five and his name was Bedel. He was as gentle as a sheep, an animal which, in physiognomy as well as, I am inclined to believe, in its not very developed intelligence, he somewhat resembled.

The very first thing that my mother said to him was: "Sir, you are not to ill-treat my son."

"Madame," he answered, "it is foreign to my character as to my principles to ill-treat my pupils."

"I adore my son, sir. I could not allow him to suffer the slightest corporal punishment, on any pretence whatever."

"I have the honour to repeat to you, Madame, that I never allow myself to administer to the children whose education is entrusted to me, even the merest fillip of the fingers."

"I have also to ask you, sir, to go easy with my son in his studies. He has a delicate constitution, and I fear the consequences of overworking him."

"My system, as a professor, harmonizes entirely with your maternal solicitude: *Chi va piano va sano*, such is my device. That should satisfy you that I have no intentions of overworking Master Paul."

And M. Bedel certainly did not overwork me. He led me on so gently, that when I was eight years old, I could only just read. But was it the poor man's fault. I will wager that out of every eight days there were seven on which I did no lessons. Either I was ill and it would have tired me to work, or, again, my mother was going out and wanted me to accom-

pany her. And then there were intermissions in the tutor's pay, owing to low-water in the family purse. There were times when hundreds of lessons had not been paid for. He kept on coming to teach me, because, no doubt, he had not too many pupils and because his kindness as a master added to his patience as a creditor had brought us to consider him as a friend. He was only paid occasionally, but he was often made to stay to dinner ; so that there was some kind of a set-off. All the same it is not to be wondered at that under these circumstances, my education was anything but satisfactory. When I was fourteen years old, M. Gaigneau, who, roulette excepted, was a sensible man, spoke of sending me to a public school ; but at the first word which he ventured on this subject my mother exploded, like a bomb. A public school! Ah ! she had not forgotten, what had happened to her darling boy, when he had only been a week at school. *He had been brought back to her dying.* Never, never would she consent to my being sent to a public school. And what reason was there for sending me to a public school? Did not one learn as well at home? Was not M. Bedel as capable as a tutor as any one else?

M. Gaigneau might have had a good deal to say on this head, but my mother continued :

"And besides, sir, you talk of public schools, of boarding and so on. I suppose you are trying to be funny. To put a boy as a boarder at a public school costs money, I can tell you. And how will

you pay the heavy bills for my son's education in one of these establishments, when you can't even pay a poor little twopenny-halfpenny tutor his wages regularly."

This was true and my father seemed to see it, for he said no more on the subject. I remained the pupil of the man whom my mother, with an estimation which was truer than she herself, perhaps, imagined it to be, had described as a 'twopenny-halfpenny tutor.' And so, if, later on in my life, serious critics, too serious critics, have learnedly enunciated, after having dissected some of my novels, the fact that these novels emanated from the pen of a man who had not even the elements of the humanities, it costs me nothing to admit that these gentlemen are quite in the right. I humbly confess that I shall never translate Horace as Jules Jamin did, or Homer like Madame Dacier. I shan't even try to do so. As to my style, if people have often found it slovenly, I can only say that having, in most of my tales, taken my characters from among the lower classes of society, I should have thought it clumsy on my part—to say the least of it—to make them speak like Academicians, and finally, as concerning the faults of grammar which I am accused of, I will remark that having heard hundreds of times over that even the greatest writers sin in this respect, I don't think it at all surprising that I, who am only a popular novelist, should have sometimes deserved this reproach.

To conclude, because I am not writing in defence of my books here, which would bore you as much as it would bore me, but my souvenirs, I will say one last word. Such as I am, as a writer, I have been accepted, I have been read, I am still very much read, and I fancy that I shall be read for a long time to come, were it only by people anxious to read of a period already so far behind us and so different from that in which we are now living and by people who want to laugh. To laugh! This is a kind of pleasure which to my thinking is not very liberally afforded by the novels which are published to-day.

Well, such as I am, and without bearing the least grudge—I swear it—against those elegant people who have called me “the cook’s novelist” (which in view of the number of editions and translations of my books would prove that there are terribly many cooks in the world), such as I am, I say, I am satisfied with myself and with the rest, and only hope that my colleagues may be able to say the same, when they reach my age. So you see that my seventy-six years have not spoiled my temper.

If I worked badly as M. Bedel’s pupil, I made up for it by working splendidly as the pupil of M. Mengal. Who was M. Mengal? He was my music-master. My stepfather was very intimate with M Mengal, first cornet-player at the Théâtre Feydeau, and at the same time a talented violinist, and had begged him to give me some violin lessons, as

a friend. Had I had no talent for music, M. Mengal would no doubt have tired very soon of teaching me as a friend, that is for nothing. As it was, I was very fond of music and learned easily. My rapid progress rewarded M. Mengal's care and labour. I had the satisfaction of rewarding him in a more substantial manner, by giving him the *libretti* of two comic operas to set to music. These were *Une Nuit au château* and *les Infidèles*, both of which were successfully performed.

So I learned the violin and when I was fifteen, I could play it well enough to take part in a quatuor ; but, what I liked best of all, was to play for others to dance. I had a friend of my own age, a lad called Lepère, who played the flute, and at least once a week, for three or four years, Lepère and I, formed an orchestra to the delight of innumerable *soirées dansantes*. Lepère used to play out of tune. The good fellow's passion for the flute was an unhappy one, for his audiences. But as he played loud and long, people were not too critical. We were received with open arms wherever we went, and laden with compliments, cakes and glasses of punch.

One evening, however, at the house of one of the colleagues of M. Gaigneau, a clerk in the Revenue Office like my stepfather, the cakes were so hard, the punch so weak and the compliments so few, that, towards midnight, drawing Lepère aside, I said to him :

"It's very dull here. I'm off, will you come with

me?"

"Gad, if you go, I am not going to stay here all alone."

Lepère made a face. He did not like to give his flute a rest so early in the evening. But, without my violin, his flute was nothing but a rose-tree without its support, an ivy-plant with no tree to cling to ; and so his flute followed my violin.

We left the house where our talents had been so meanly requited, and were walking towards the Rue du Temple, at the corner of the boulevard, opposite the Jardins de Paphos where I was then living with my mother and stepfather, and which was near to the house where my friend lived. It was in the autumn, the autumn of 1810 ; the night was bright and warm, and as I walked along, with my violin-case in my hand, over the pavement of the dark and deserted town, I tried to cheer Lepère with my conversation and to bring a smile to his lips.

Suddenly, as we were walking down a small street, we heard the sounds of a piano, of dancing feet and of peals of laughter. We looked up and saw, on the fifth floor, two windows lighted up and wide open, and through these windows reflected on the house opposite the shadows of people who were dancing like wild men. We halted.

"That's something like it," I said. "They seem to be enjoying themselves here at any rate."

"Yes," said Lepère with a sigh. "They're dancing one of the quadrilles which we play the best

of any. *The Caliph of Bagdad*, our triumph."

"But what an orchestra. You can't call it a piano, it's a kettle."

"I've an idea, Lepère?"

"Well, what is it?"

"Supposing we accompany the kettle."

"What? Here, in the street? Are you mad. We should get ourselves arrested by the patrol."

"Bah! the patrol is a big way off."

I had got my violin already fixed under my chin. Lepère did not resist, the flute rose to his mouth, one, two, three. Off we go, joining with the piano in *The Caliph of Bagdad* quadrille. It was not in the same key, but we did not mind about that. At the sound of our music, as melodious as it was unexpected, the dancers stop dancing and come hurrying to the windows. They applaud and call to us: "Won't you come up? Do come up?"

"Shall we go up?" I say to Lepère.

"What, to people we don't know?"

"What of that. They are people who dance. It is certain that they are not coiners!"

I do not know who these people were, I have never known; but what I do knew is that that night was one of the pleasantest I ever spent in my life. For Lepère and I went up to the ball on the fifth floor. Even if we had not wanted to go up, we should have been forced to do so, as a band of strong young fellows, about half a dozen of them, came pel-

ting down the stairs to fetch us and would have carried us up by main force. We went up and played our prettiest quadrilles, to the satisfaction of all, and danced ourselves, and when we had danced, we supped, at three o'clock in the morning. There was a supper, a supper with nothing *recherché* about it. As far as I can remember, the *pièces de résistance* consisted of a cold leg of mutton and a small ham. But at sixteen a ham and a leg of mutton are worth a truffled turkey at fifty. And then, all these people, petty clerks, I fancy, with a mixture of workmen, were all so good-humoured and bright. There were such hearty faces amongst the men and such pretty ones amongst the women.

Well, it was only at five o'clock, after a last quadrille, the stirrup-cup quadrille, that the party broke up, and Lepère and I could get away. We were overwhelmed with thanks, our arms ached from shaking hands so often, and we were forced to give our solemn promise, when we left, that we would come to the next ball.

But, as I have said, I never knew who these people were, nor what the house was where I had played for others to dance, had danced myself and supped. And Lepère knew as little about it as I. When the master of the house invited us to come to his next ball, he forgot to ask us our names or to give us his. Perhaps it was because we were all rather excited when we parted, for the mutton and the ham had been washed down with copious draughts. How-

ever that may be, as we did not even remember the name of the street where the ball had been given, it will be easily understood that it was difficult to pay our host another visit, or even a polite call.

Was that to be regretted? Who knows? On the first occasion, we liked these people whom we did not know and they liked us. Perhaps if we had gone again, we might have bored ourselves, perhaps our hosts might have come to blows with us. We never saw our friends of one night again. It was all the better so. There are many such pleasures, which are agreeable only when taken once, and without reflection.

### CHAPTER III

I lose my professor. — A child's library. — Parisian Theatres between 1802 and 1805. — Napoleon I did not understand Parisian humour. — Mademoiselle Montansier. — A meeting in 1812. — Pâris the animal-painter. — An episode during the famine. — About a marriage which Mdlle. Montansier was on the point of contracting. — Barras. — General Bonaparte. — The origin of the Théâtre du Palais Royal. — A slight grudge against the First Empire. — I wish to see the Emperor at close quarters. — Birth of the King of Rome. — A new violinist is introduced into the Court of the Tuileries. — My first book. — How I became a novelist. — '*My Wife's Child.*' — Clerk to a banker, and in apprenticeship as a Great Man. — The first page of a first chapter. — Who Zoé was. — M. Théodore. — Writing consoles for all.

M. Bedel having left Paris, towards the middle of the year 1808, to go to Auvergne, on family business, my studies were perforce interrupted. I was to have resumed them on his return, but as he never returned, for reasons of *force majeure*, that is to say, because he died of inflammation of the lungs at Clermont Ferrand, my mother declared that I was sufficiently advanced to be able to study without a master.

And I really think, that I worked better when left

to myself.

I had formed a small library out of my weekly pocket-money, and in this library Molière had the place of honour. Oh, Molière! I never wearied of reading him. I knew him all by heart. I also liked Racine and especially *Les Plaideurs*. I had already formed a preference for the Muse of Comedy. *Cuique suum*, you know. And as I read this side-splitting play over and over again, I used to think, as many must have thought before me, that it was astonishing that, having shown himself in *Les Plaideurs* such a master of Comedy, Racine should have persisted in devoting himself to tragedy. Certainly, *Phèdre* and *Britannicus* are splendid plays, but what a pity it is that their author never wrote a companion piece to *Les Plaideurs*. Another book which also delighted me immensely—perhaps I shall surprise you in saying so—was Plutarch's *Lives*. Can you imagine Paul de Kock reading Plutarch. For what purpose? In what way did it help him? Well, and were it only that it taught me that, supposing he could return to-day to this earth, he would have the greatest difficulty in finding material for a thirteenth volume of his *Lives*, it cannot be said that I wasted my time in reading him.

In the afternoon, from noon till five o'clock, I worked at my translations, and prose compositions, which were corrected by M. Gaigneau, when he had the time to do so. In the morning I practised the violin, and after dinner, except when I went to a

party or to the theatre, I used to read my favourite authors.

I have said that my mother was very fond of the theatre. We often went there, only my mother and I, for my stepfather was obliged—so he told us—three times a week to go back to his office in the evenings. My mother liked the play as a play, and had no special preference for any particular style of dramatic entertainment. I make a mistake. She cared but little for the Opera and preferred the Opéra Comique. But seats at the Opéra Comique were expensive, and so we used generally to patronize the theatres where melodramas and vaudevilles were played. I can remember very well that, as a child, I saw, from 1802 to 1805, the first performances of Caigniez's *Jugement de Salomon* at the Ambigu Comique; Cuvelier and Hapde's *l'Enfant prodigue* at the Porte-Saint-Martin; Ribié and Hapde's *la Lampe merveilleuse* and Martainville's *Roderic et Cunégonde* at the Gaité; Desaugier's *le Quartier d'hiver ou les Métamorphoses* at the Jeunes Artistes; Madame Montenclos's *Robert-le-Bossu ou les Trois Sœurs* at the Variétés Amusantes; *les Quatre fils Aymon et la Fille Hussard*, pantomimes with equestrian feats, at the Brothers Franconi's Circus in the Rue Mont-Thabor, and *Le Demoisel et la Bergerette ou la Femme Vindictive*, at the Cité Theatre.

As far as I can remember, this Cité theatre which was just opposite the Palais de Justice, was a horrible

place, small, dark, dirty and smoky. So that when in 1807, this theatre, together with seven or eight more, was suppressed by the Emperor's orders, it was but little regretted. All the same, I can't help wondering why Napoleon, who hesitated so little to sacrifice his subjects to his glory, should have felt it necessary to reduce their pleasures. What harm was there that Paris should have numerous theatres, since, in spite of the constant diminution of the population—a consequence of the continual wars—they were always crowded. But Napoleon I was well and truly the uncle of Napoleon III. I say this without bitterness. He was not a Parisian in his turn of mind.

The first, by caprice, wiped out a dozen theatres by a stroke of the pen; the second, under pretence of beautifying the capital, sent half-a-dozen theatres packing, to set themselves up again where they could. "You are a goldsmith, M. Josse," will be said to me. I admit it. Both as a spectator and as an author, I sigh as I think of my dear *Boulevard du Crime*, such as I knew it so many years, with all its theatres, side by side, with their doors open. I am a goldsmith, yes, but M. Haussmann must be an Alsatian.

It was at this Cité theatre that I had the good fortune to shudder for the first time at the yells of *Tautin*, the celebrated traitor. I used to split my sides with laughing over Brunet and Tiercelin at the Variétés-Amusantes. The Variétés-Amusantes used

also to be called The Variétés-Montansier. This theatre had been built on the site of the Beaujolais puppet-show by Mademoiselle Montansier out of her own pocket, but was sent packing in 1806, because people used to enjoy the fun there so much that the Comédie-Française suffered from the competition. Driven out in this way, Mdlle. Montansier built a new theatre out of what remained of a once considerable fortune, on a site which was in the neighbourhood of the old theatre. She gave her name to this theatre. At first, like the old Théâtre de Beaujolais, it was only licensed for wooden actors. The Variétés-Montansier is the theatre known to-day as the Théâtre du Palais-Royal. Under the second Republic, as the word 'royal' shocked people's ears, the theatre was called by its original name. That however only lasted a very short time. People soon got tired of making themselves ridiculous for so little.

I never made Mademoiselle Montansier's acquaintance, but I often saw her in my youth and, especially the first time I met her, she produced a great impression on me. That was in 1812. I was walking in the galleries of the Palais-Royal, formerly known as the Palais du Tribunat, with a painter, a friend of mine, called Pâris, who died recently, poor and forgotten. He might have been one of our most famous animal-painters, if he had only known how to push himself forward. Pâris was seven years my senior. He combined the heartiest good humour

with much native wit. He was, moreover, a keen observer and never forgot anything that he had seen or heard and could tell it in the most amusing way. I remember one of his anecdotes about the famine in 1795, which is worth repeating.

Pâris was the fifth child of a small stationer in the Rue Saint-Denis. It is difficult for poor people to feed five children, two daughters and three sons, in a time of famine, and the table was not laid every day at that stationer's house in March and April, 1795, the less so because, as an additional misfortune, his wife was ill in bed, which prevented the unhappy man from going every day, as was the custom at that delightful period, to wait for hours outside a baker's shop for his rations of bread.

Under these circumstances, one of old Pâris's daughters, the youngest, Marthe, a girl of thirteen, sacrificed herself for the common good. As to the elder sister, she would not have ventured into the crowd for her weight in cakes. Martha was not afraid, and braving the fatigue of a long wait in the street and what was worse, the insults and violence of the mob, used to accomplish her task and return home triumphantly, with her loaf under her arm. Now, whilst waiting her turn in the line, she had noticed that, by special favour, which showed that the people of Paris in spite of the pangs of hunger had some good feeling left, women who were in an interesting condition were allowed to pass first into the baker's shop. What does the young lady do,

the next day? She takes a pillow and, putting it to a use which can be guessed, goes to her father for the money for the bread. The father is surprised at her extraordinary size and asks her what it means. Martha explains her plan with the greatest coolness. "Since women in an interesting condition go in first by favour, I have put myself in an interesting condition. It's simple enough." And simple enough it was, to be sure, but, none the less, the stationer refused to allow her to carry out her plan, although he laughed till the tears came into his eyes, at the girl's stratagem, in ingenuously dishonouring herself, so as to get the family bread quicker.

"The dear little woman," said Pâris, "could not understand why her father forced her to remove her pillow. 'But I should save at least two hours, like this, Papa,' she kept repeating, 'let me go like this. I shall get back so much sooner to look after Mamma?'"

The mother herself had to speak quite angrily to Miss Martha before she would consent to become slim again. Three years later, when she was sixteen years old, the girl used to blush up to the roots of her hair when she heard this story. There was no need for her blush. The story was all to the credit of her childish simplicity and goodness of heart. There are many things in the book called *Morality in Action* which outwardly perhaps are more chaste, but in their core are not more moral than this act of hers.

But all this is taking me far away from my first meeting, in 1812, with Mademoiselle Montansier. Let me get back to it.

I was walking in the Palais Royal, as I have already told you, with Pâris, when there passed in front of us a little old woman, so old, so decrepit, so wrinkled, so shrivelled, and, into the bargain, so grotesquely accoutred — a canary-coloured dress, buskin-boots, a very ‘loud’ cashmere shawl over her shoulders, and a kind of turban on her head—that, at first sight, I seemed to see the fairy Carabosse, although that fairy is reputed the most wicked of all fairies, whilst this little old lady looked mild and kind.

“Don’t you know that lady?” said Pâris.

“No, who is it?”

“Mademoiselle Montansier.”

“You don’t say so. The theatre manageress?”

“Yes, she has been manageress of a great number of theatres in turn, beginning with the theatre at Versailles, to which she was appointed by Queen Marie Antoinette. Oh! she has made millions of money in the business. So Barras had planned that a certain general, in whom he took an interest, should marry Mademoiselle Montansier.”

“Who was that general?”

Pâris bent forward and whispered in my ear. It was not safe to speak too loud in a public place in Paris under M. Fouché’s police.

“That general’s name was Bonaparte.”

I burst out laughing.

"What nonsense! Napoleon marrying la Montansier!"

"Hush! You mustn't shout out things like that. It is fair to say that the general did not rise to the bait, golden as it was. But people say that Barras' plan was very favourably entertained by Montansier, in spite of her sixty summers. The little chap Bonaparte had quite stolen her heart. Well, as you know, this marriage never came off. Bonaparte made a better match. He did not marry a millionaire; he married France."

Pâris spoke these last words in his ordinary tone of voice. He no longer minded being overheard by a *mouchard*.

He continued:

"As to la Montansier, who had already buried one husband, it is affirmed that three years ago she married a fellow called Forioso, a rope dancer, who is busy spending what remains of her millions. She lives just opposite, there on the second floor, under the arcades of the Café de Chartres, which used to belong to her. And, as, after all, she has never done any harm, but, on the contrary, has done a good deal of good, let us hope that, in spite of Forioso, when she dies, it will be on a featherbed, and not on a heap of straw in a gutter."

Pâris's wish was fulfilled. La Montansier was poor, but not destitute when she died, towards 1820,

in her apartment in the Palais-Royal.

I blamed Napoleon above for his abuse of authority in regard to the pleasures of the Parisians. I did not mean thereby to imply that I do not admit that he was a man of genius. This is my opinion, and I force nobody to share it, at a time when out of opposition to the nephew, people are trying to prove that the uncle, that great legislator, that glorious captain, who turned two thirds of Europe into French provinces, was nothing but a sort of bandit and idiot combined, whose memory ought to be buried in mud. Those who write such things are dangerous lunatics, and those who listen to them and hawk them round are pitiful simpletons. Is the future of which these gentlemen so fondly dream so brilliant that they dare thus to spit upon the past?

But I really think that, forgetting the principles of my whole lifetime, both as a writer and a man, I have allowed myself to be led away to talk politics. I am being influenced by bad examples. One hears nothing but politics now-a-days, on every side. It is enough to make one idiotic. There had been a respite from this for some fifteen years past, but now it has broken out again. So much the worse, say I.

On the other hand, I am not writing a novel, but my souvenirs, and so I may be allowed occasionally to say what I think of what I have seen and of what I see.

To return to Napoleon I. I admit that I bore him a slight grudge, first because in 1807 he suppressed a number of innocent little theatres, where I used to amuse myself, and secondly because in 1813 my step-father was forced, by his laws, to pay for two substitutes for the army for me, one after the other. The first substitute happened to get himself killed at Lützen, and I was forced to provide another, as the authorities said that that did not count. Fortunately for me M. Gaigneau had received a small legacy that year, but for which, for want of money, I should have been forced to serve. This would not have suited me at all, for Bellona's laurels were by no means my ideal.

But I can pride myself on one thing with reference to the first Emperor of the French, and the same applies to the various sovereigns who succeeded him, that I did not give him the slightest ass's kick after he fell, any more than I wrote the smallest poem in his praise whilst he was reigning. At the same time, in 1811, some time before I became liable to the conscription, and accordingly felt a bit sore—with the prospect of having to don a uniform—against the man who, on account of his furious consumption of human flesh, used to be called the Ogre in not a few houses, I got a violent longing to see Napoleon at close quarters, at the closest quarters possible.

The year 1811 was, according to history, one of the most glorious and prosperous of Napoleon's

reign. France was at that time at peace with almost all the powers ; the Emperor, who, for reasons of State, had separated himself the year before from his good Josephine, to marry Marie-Louise, had then paternal reasons for congratulating himself on this *coup d'Etat*. A son had been born to him. Everything was rose-coloured in the vastest of possible empires. Who could have thought then that Napoleon II would not succeed to Napoleon I?

Paris was radiantly happy for months after the birth of the King of Rome. It was radiantly happy, chiefly because it saw in this child a pledge of peace. Now patriotic joy is contagious, and so it happened that I, who till then had never had any wish to look, face to face, at the sun, came to have no dearer wish than to see Napoleon.

I told Mengal, my professor, of this, and one evening in the month of July, he said to me :

"You wish to see the Emperor. I can enable you to do so. There is to be a concert the day after tomorrow at the Tuileries, in the Cour de l'Horloge. I am going to this concert and I will take you with me."

"With you? But what right have I to go?"

"As a violinist, of course. But as you can't play the pieces which are going to be performed, you will only pretend to play. The bandmaster is a friend of mine and as I have told him what is up, he won't say anything to you."

It was on the 7th or 8th of July, 1811. Why was

a concert given at the 'Tuileries on that day? I do not remember. Perhaps it was to celebrate Marie-Louise's convalescence—she had been kept to her bed for a long time after her confinement,—or perhaps the little King of Rome had cut his first tooth. Be that as it may, I was able to glut my eyes on the Emperor and the Empress—who came out on the balcony at her husband's side—whilst pretending to scrape my violin. The imperial couple were both in gala dress. Behind them was a crowd of princes, marshals and great ladies glittering with gold and diamonds. Marie-Louise looked handsome, but Napoleon seemed to me fat, yellow, puffy, with his head wedged in between his shoulders. He did not look the hero I had expected to see. I had come to look at a demigod and saw a fat man. He withdrew at the end of the concert, after making a gesture of thanks, of which I took my share. Well, after all, if I had played nothing, I was not paid either. I had neglected my business to get a peep at him, and that was well worth an act of courtesy on his part.

It was in this same year, 1811, that I wrote my first novel, *My Wife's Child*, that luckless child which I had such difficulty in starting in the world—where, I must add, he never distinguished himself. But if I am to tell this episode properly, I must go back three years.

It was six months after M. Bedel's departure and death. As decided by my mother, I was pursuing

my studies as best I could, alone.

One evening I was at the house of one of our friends, whom I was visiting with my parents. After a game of *reversi*, I had played a piece on the violin to the satisfaction of all, when a tall, meagre, angular man—whom I remember as if he stood before me—said to M. Gaigneau after greatly complimenting me on my talent:

“So you intend to bring up this young man as a musician. You want to make an artist of him?”

“Oh, only as an amateur,” said my mother. “My husband and I are not rich enough to wait till my son can earn money as a composer, and I don’t want him to give lessons or to play in the theatres.”

“Ah, ah,” said the tall gentleman. “If that is so, I don’t see what is to prevent your son, Madame, from employing his time more profitably than in scraping the cat-gut strings. How old are you, my friend?”

“I shall soon be fifteen,” I said.

“Very well. Now we are just looking out, for our business, for young clerks of good education, whom we could trust.”

“And what is your business, please?” asked my mother.

“Madame, I am head-cashier at Messrs. Schérer & Finguérin, the bankers. My name is Mathieu Delavarde, at your service.”

My stepfather made a slight grimace. It struck him that the post would hardly suit me. He had

guessed my inclinations, poor, dear man. But his grimace sealed my fate, in a manner opposed to its meaning. My mother saw it, and turning graciously to M. Mathieu Delavarde, said with a smile:

"Sir, my husband and I both thank you infinitely for your kind offer, both for my son and for ourselves, and we will take it into immediate consideration. Should we accept it, what should we have to do, sir?"

"Nothing, but to bring Master Paul to the office one morning, that's all."

"Thank you, sir."

I am sorry to say it, for I have always loved the fair sex and shall, I hope, love it as long as I live, finding women's society far more agreeable, for every possible reason, than that of men ; but women have a terrible defect, contradictoriness. Contradictoriness is their essence. They are so created. Look at Eve. Adam was afraid of touching the apple, Eve would taste it at all costs. Had my father accepted M. Delavarde's offer at the outset, I am quite sure that my mother would have rejected it with all her vigour, but as he appeared to think little of it, she jumped at it.

When we got home that evening, she said to me :

"You have heard what was said, my boy, by that gentleman, who is head-cashier in the bank of Scherer and Finguerlin. It rests with you whether you enter this office or not. What do you say about it?"

*"Mon Dieu,* mamma, all I can say is that if you wish me to do so, I will go into this office."

"Yes, certainly I wish it, my boy. You have reached an age when you ought to be seriously at work. There's a fine career in a bank, and a man doesn't lower himself by going into a business of that sort. Look at your father."

M. Gaigneau shook his head.

"M. de Kock," he said, "was a banker. That is very different from being a bank-clerk."

"And what of that, sir? What is to prevent my son becoming a banker, one day like his father?"

"What is to prevent him? What is to...?"

"Of course, I know that it is not with the funds with which you will provide him that he will be able to set up in business. Well, he will do without you, sir, and that will make little difference to him, for he has long accustomed himself not to count on you. He is intelligent and honest, he will work hard and he will get on. And then at least, when I am an old woman, thanks to my son, I shan't be forced to run after a twenty-franc piece, as I now am at least six days out of every seven. So you will be good enough, sir, to take my son, to-morrow morning, to M. Delavarde's office."

"Very well, very well, as you please, my dear."

Bank-clerk! I was doomed to rows of figures from morning till evening. Figures, which to my way of thinking, are the most dismal things in the world. Have you not noticed that men who have to

do with figures, all seem, more or less, to be haunted, out of their business hours, by a dream, like Père Sournois in *Les Petites Danaïdes*. No, there is no laughing in casting up an addition. So much and so much make so much. It must come out so much, if it does not, it is you who are to blame. Your totals don't agree with the accounts, your balance-sheet is not correct. Hunt, hunt, hunt up your mistake and don't stop till you find it.

I spent five years with Messrs. Schérer and Finguérin, from October 1808 till December 1813. And it would seem that my employers were not too dissatisfied with me, seeing that when I left them I was earning eight pounds a month, which was a very good salary at that time. Does that mean that I was an excellent employé? No. My head was too full of other things. But although I had no taste for my work, I discharged my duties with care and punctuality. I prided myself on never incurring any reproach. Besides, I was pleased to earn some money which enabled me gradually to add to my library, to try on clothes which pleased me, to go in the evenings to the theatre, and on Sundays to go for excursions with friends male—and female.

For, towards 1811, I began to have female friends, the sort of friends one has at eighteen, friends with whom one is far more disposed to exchange kisses than philosophical remarks. And this will not, I suppose, surprise you, for you did not expect me to tell you that I waited till I was of age before falling

in love. As a matter of fact it was one of my first love-affairs which prompted me to write my first novel, for the simple reason that *she* adored novels. She was a grisette, who worked at artificial flowers in the Rue Saint-Martin. Seventeen. Pretty? Well, no; piquant rather, with her tilted nose and eyes which looked as if they had been bored with a gimlet. But so gay, so fond of laughing, that the only books she cared for were books which made her laugh, which shows that she had very good taste. On Sundays, when the weather was bad and we could not go out to the St. Gervais meadows or to the wood at Romainville, we used to shut ourselves up all day in her little room and read Pigault-Le-brun.

One day, however, Zoé was forced to go on a journey, a long journey. One of her aunts was ill at Coulommiers and wanted her attendance. How long was she going to be absent? A month, or six weeks. Oh! but were it to be a year, her heart would be mine and mine would be hers. We swore in on a copy of *Monsieur Botte*.

What can be done, whilst awaiting the return of a sweetheart to whom one has vowed fidelity? Previous to her departure, I had been tempted, on five or six different occasions, after reading some successful book, to write a small *chef-d'œuvre* myself.

I had even written out the scenario of a book, with this object in view. It was a scenario of thirty

lines ; I have never made them longer than that. Well, the opportunity was a good one. I was forced to keep quiet for a whole month, and would employ this month over a work which would win me Zoé's congratulations on her return. I had three or four quires of good paper ; I chose the whitest, the smoothest ; I trimmed six quills in advance and—and forward !—

### Chapter I.

#### Journeys, accidents, adventures.

We shall never reach Strasburg this evening, Mullern. Tell the postboy to whip up these accursed horses. —I have told him at least twenty times during the last hour to do so, Colonel, and he answered me that he could not go any faster without breaking all our three necks. — Henry will have left Strasburg by the time we get there. —Well, then Colonel, we will continue the pursuit. —And perhaps we shan't get up to him in time to prevent the catastrophe which I dread.—If that happens, Colonel, you cannot blame yourself, for, upon my soul, we have done nothing the last six weeks but travel posthaste, day and night, from Framberg to Strasburg, from Strasburg to Paris, from Paris to Framberg ; my trowsers are sticking to my thighs, so at the next inn everybody will see the shape of my legs, Colonel.—If, at least we had accomplished the object of this journey.—Ah, if I could have a good bottle of wine to help me to wake up my limbs. But nothing, nothing, not even a

wretched glass of the commonest wine to quench the thirst which is consuming me. Ah, Colonel, if it wasn't you, would I thus patiently endure such tortures?—Do you regret having followed me, Mullern? —I, Colonel, I would follow you to the end of the world, but I do object to going without food and drink.

Here the conversation was interrupted by a violent crash. The axle of the post-chaise was broken, and a minute later Colonel Framberg and his travelling companion were flung out into the ditch by the side of the road. It was all the postboy's fault. He was driving so fast, that he had not noticed this ditch.

Well, there is no nonsense about that opening, at any rate. It is the opening of *My Wife's Child* if you please. There is no long-winded introduction to the tale; it begins with a situation at once. A colonel and his faithful hussar, the good Mullern, who discuss their business as they drive along in a post-chaise, the axle-tree which breaks, the travellers who roll into the ditch, at no distance, of course, from a house where they are received with open arms and where of course they come in for all kinds of adventures. It was in this wise that one began a novel sixty years ago. One took the bull by the horns. Now-a-days, the bull only appears in the second or third chapter. Each age has its style, as for me I still prefer the fashion of 1811.

In one month, I had written the two volumes of *My Wife's Child*. I made it two volumes, because that would cost less to print than a book of three volumes, and so would tempt a publisher more readily. But before taking *My Wife's Child* to a publisher, I could not resist the pleasure of showing the manuscript to my mother and stepfather and of saying to them : "It is I who have written this. And if you would like me to read you a few chapters, I will do so with the greatest pleasure."

And then there was Zoé who would soon be back. Her aunt must be either dead or cured. What a thing this love for glory is. I had been so taken up during a whole month with my novel, so absorbed, night after night, that I had barely found time to go twice or thrice to ask the porter at her house if he had any news of my sweetheart. Oh ! how proud my little Zoé would be of me, when she heard that I too was an author.

Alas—and this was the first of the series of disappointments and worries that came to me over *My Wife's Child*—my mother, when I offered to read her a work which I had written all by myself, which had all come out of my head, my mother answered : "Bah, your novel must be something fine. Some rhapsody. It would be much better for you to try and get some promotion in your office, than to write rubbish."

My stepfather was more amiable. He took my manuscript and promised to have a look at it, in the

evening before going to bed. But he was always so tired on going to bed, poor, dear man. He had laid *My Wife's Child* on the table by his bedside, and left it there without touching it for a whole week. The dust began to cover it with a yellow shroud. So I took my manuscript away. My stepfather never noticed that I had done so.

As to Zoé—alas, that was the unkindest blow of all. After an absence of six weeks, Zoé came back from Coulommiers. Her aunt was well again, but Zoé had made the acquaintance at her aunt's house down there of a cousin, a fine young fellow of twenty-five, who, being anxious to see the metropolis, had thought it a good plan to save hotel expenses by putting up at his cousin's house.

Now Zoé's 'house' consisted of one room only. So there was no misapprehension possible. "Théodore," (that was the cousin's name) "won't be staying in Paris long," she said. "Wait until he's gone and then we will see each other again. You know, one's first duty is to one's relations."

The jade!—I had *My Wife's Child* in my pocket. I had brought it for her. I did not read her a single line of it.

Bah, since my family and my sweetheart refused to encourage my first steps in literature, I would do without the encouragements of family and sweetheart. My book would be printed ; it would be very successful ; the newspapers would speak of it ; the lending-libraries would fight for it, and my revenge

should be to carry copies of *My Wife's Child* to an indifferent mother and to a jilting mistress, and to say to the one "You had no faith in me" and to the other "You were faithless. But I do not care. For now, in spite of you, I have a name. I am a celebrated novelist."

## CHAPTER IV

Travels in search of a Publisher. — Who M. Fages was. — A word about Bezou. — I tackle Pollet, the bookseller. — He said ‘Business is bad.’ — Another disappointment. — Excellent M. Quoy’s terror. — What sort of a lunch one got for a louis in 1811. — *Les Vendanges de Bourgogne.* — Dorvigny, an author of the good old days. — A prince *de la main gauche.* — How a man of wit died in the old days. — The outspokenness of the ancients, the prudishness of modern people. — Two years of pleasure and heedlessness. — How I behaved at twenty. — Consequences of a soirée at the Tivoli. — The wife of a naval officer. — A night of love and fear. — You won’t catch me there again. — A woman’s glance, four years later.

“The first step is taken unconsciously.” This saying is absolutely true about one’s first visit to a publisher; the second visit is the formidable matter. I felt so sure that the man whom I should ask to publish my book would reply at once: “Why of course, with pleasure. So, so you have written a novel. Let me have it.” Two volumes, you know, only two volumes, would not cost very much to print. And I was not asking any royalties. I did not mean to speak about royalties until the publication of my second book. For of course, I couldn’t

be expected to go on enriching a publisher all my lifetime without wanting a little for myself also. But my first book, oh ! my first book should be his for nothing. Should he sell ten thousand copies—and why shouldn't he?—so much the better for him.

Oh, day-dreams of the budding author. The name of the publisher to whom I had determined to confide the birth of *My Wife's Child*, was Fages. He lived on the boulevard Saint-Martin, opposite the Rue de Lancry. He published a great many theatrical pieces and I had bought them all and we had thus struck up an acquaintance. I never missed going to see M. Fages on my way home from my office in the evening. We used to talk about literary matters.

It was with an almost solemn air that that evening, I marched into his shop, with my manuscript under my arm.

"Ah, Monsieur de Kock. And how are you this evening?"

"Very well, Monsieur Fages. And if you can spare the time, I should be glad of a word with you in private."

"All right, all right... Madame Fages, I say, Madame Fages, be good enough to look after the shop for about five minutes whilst I talk with M. de Kock."

Madame Fages, a tall woman—as tall as her husband was short, very amiable also and so fond of smiling—too fond of smiling indeed, as she had only two teeth, one on the right and one on the left, which rather marred the beauty of her smile, Ma-

dame Fages, I say, had taken her seat behind the counter and I was with M. Fages in the backshop.

"Now what can I do for you, my dear Monsieur de Kock?"

"This is the matter. I have written a novel, M. Fages."

"Oh, indeed."

"A novel in two volumes. It is very bright, and very amusing, in the style of Pigault-Lebrun. *My Wife's Child*. Not a bad title, eh?"

"No, the title is droll."

"That's what I think. Well here's my novel for you, M. Fages."

"For me? What do you want me to do with it?"

"Why, to publish it, of course."

"To publish it. Oh, that's quite out of my line, Monsieur de Kock. I publish plays, and I am not at all sure that the speculation is a good one. I am not a rich man and I can't pay eight or twelve pounds for a piece, like Barba of the Palais Royal."

"I don't ask for any royalties. We can talk about than when you publish my second book, if my first has sold well."

"Oh, no publisher ever pays anything for a first book, so it's not a question of royalties."

"Then what prevents you—?"

"Why! the cost of printing it, of course, and the cost of the paper. It costs a jolly sight more to get out a novel, than a play."

"Nonsense. Two small volumes. Such small vol-

umes."

"If they're so small, they can't be volumes."

"Oh, they're big enough for . . . What I mean to say is . . . You see. . ."

"Very sorry, M. de Kock, but I'm not your man."

"But won't you read my *Child* before refusing it altogether?"

"No. I don't doubt that your *Child* is, as you say, very amusing and very bright, but, as I have said before, I have made it a rule not to publish novels. You're by no means the first author who has asked me to do so."

"Then you reject them—like this—without even reading them. Supposing somebody brought you a masterpiece to-morrow, a *Nouvelle Héloïse*, a *Manon Lescaut*?"

"I should reject it all right. Mon Dieu, yes. What would you have one do? Needs must, when one is poor. Write plays, melodramas, vaudevilles, and get them acted and I shall only be too happy to print them. But novels—But you must excuse me, my dear M. de Kock, I think I hear my wife calling me. When she's alone in the shop, my wife, she loses her head."

"Your servant, Monsieur Fages."

"Yours to command, Monsieur de Kock."

"A last word. As you seem to have made up your mind not to publish novels, I won't insist, but you might be able to advise me. What other publisher do you think I ought to see? Who would be most

likely—”

“Go and see Barba.”

“Oh, Barba is Pigault-Lebrun’s publisher. I should never dare to go to him.”

“Humph. True. If your book is in Pigault’s style, Barba would not care for it. Well go and see Dentu, or Pigoreau. Stay. You won’t lose anything by trying. Go to the Rue du Temple and see a man called Pollet, who has just set up in business. I hear that he means to publish novels as well as plays.”

“Pollet, Rue du Temple?”

“Yes, opposite the Rue Chapon.”

“Thanks, and *au revoir*.”

I shook hands with Fages, as usual, on leaving him, but without warmth. “What an ass the fellow is! On the pretence that he only publishes vaudevilles and melodramas, he admits, that, if even the most charming novel was offered to him, he would refuse to read it. And then he complains that he doesn’t get rich. Ah, when I write for the stage, he needn’t expect to get any of my plays to print.”

And, as a matter of fact, when later I wrote plays, I did not let Fages have them. I bore him a grudge. He noticed this, and spoke of it to his successor, Bezou, a friend of Barba’s, with whom I afterwards arranged for the publication of several of my vaudevilles. Bezou, I may mention, was a very amiable man and I used to ask him to dinner. One had to

take one's time, when dining with him. He had lost his teeth when he was a young man, and, at dinner, when a slice of beef, or of mutton was placed before him, he used to take out his watch and lay it on the table and say: "It will take me half-an-hour, you know, to get through this, and I mustn't be expected to talk, either." Barba, whose jokes were not always in the best taste, used to say: "You made a bad bargain, Bezou, in buying Fages' business." "Why so?" "Why, because you ought to have bargained, in the agreement, for his wife's two teeth, over and above the shop. Supposing each tooth had saved you five minutes at dinner, just think what a lot of time you would have saved."

But to come back to *My Wife's Child*, which with full speed I carried to M. Pollet, bookseller in the Rue du Temple, the very same evening, after leaving M. Fages. But I walked no longer with head erect. A first defeat had robbed me of my courage and left me timid, frightened, stammering.

Yes, it was quite true that M. Pollet intended to publish novels—one fine day. He hadn't quite made up his mind, yet. Business was so bad. (I have never heard tradesmen say anything else and I can't help wondering how business can have survived at all, seeing how bad it has been ever since I can remember.) However, if I liked to leave my manuscript, perhaps, when he had read it—

The words were not out of M. Pollet's mouth before the manuscript had passed from my pocket into

his hands.

"And when shall I come back to hear—"

"In a week."

"Very well. To-day's Tuesday. I'll come to-morrow week."

"All right."

"That was the man for my money," I thought.  
"He reads, at least. Not like M. Fages."

How long those days of waiting seemed to me, to be sure. Would he print it? Would he reject it? These two questions haunted me even in my dreams, prevented me from eating and working, and plunged me alternately into depths of despair, or raised me to the highest heights of joy. Would he print it? Would he not print it?

He did *not* print it.

"It's not bad," he told me, "but it's not good either. It's a feeble imitation of Pigault-Lebrun. Something original—something even moderately original, would be better for us both. Imitations of Pigault are as common as ditchwater. Take more care about your style, which is weak, think out your plots and study your characters, and we may yet do business together."

I never did business with M. Pollet, any more than with M. Fages, although ten years later he began to publish novels. He was the first publisher of Balzac, who was then writing under the names of Horace de Saint-Aubin, Lord R'hône, de Villerglé and of Victor Ducange. I never approached him

again, not because I was offended with him for the opinion he had passed on my first book, an opinion with which later I fully agreed, but because I knew that he was connected with a number of authors and thought he had no room for me.

As to my *Child*, I think I have told you enough of its bad reception at the hands of the publishers, which was followed by a still worse reception at the hands of the public—when it was at last printed, at my expense. I don't exaggerate when I say that I visited from fifteen to twenty different publishers, I even went and offered it to the lending-libraries. There was a man called Quoy who kept a reading-room and lending-library on the Boulevard Saint-Martin, near the theatre of that name. He had shown some interest in me, so, one day, in a fit of rage, I put *My Wife's Child* to Quoy's throat.

"But I am not a publisher."

"You shall publish this. Publish *My Wife's Child* or die the death."

"So be it. Kill me. I am ready to die."

Quoy fell at my feet—For a moment my head reeled.—My manuscript, hanging over his head, menaced him.

Fortunately at that very moment, a lady entered the shop.

"*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, sir, if you please."

Ann Radcliffe had saved Quoy's life. I fled and still trembling at the thought of the crime I had so nearly committed, no sooner had I reached my

room, than I flung my *Child* into a cupboard, and exclaimed:

"Go then, pariah. Since none will take thee in, go, sleep in darkness and in dust."

It slept there two years. I am sorry it did not sleep there for ever.

In the autumn of this year, 1811, so fatal to my literary hopes, I met by chance a man whose name—almost entirely forgotten to-day—was as famous as that of the most celebrated dramatic writers during the last twenty years of the eighteenth century.

I was dressing, one Sunday morning, when Pâris, the painter of whom I have already spoken—I had recently made his acquaintance—came into my room. He was accompanied by another young man, called Maricot, a miniature painter, who, later, became one of my most intimate friends.

They had come to take me out to lunch. The day before—joyous surprise—Maricot had sold a portrait and had got twenty francs more for it than he had expected to get. So we were to 'blue' these twenty francs. We were to have 'a regular blow-out.'—Do not laugh, one could have a 'regular blow-out,' for twenty francs in a restaurant in 1811. True, one did not get pearls dissolved in vinegar like Cleopatra, but, all the same, three people could lunch on twenty francs, at that time, as well as, now-a-days, for sixty.

There was at that time in the Faubourg du Tem-

ple, on the left as one went up the boulevard, just where later the Saint-Martin's Canal was constructed, a small restaurant called "Les Vendanges de Bourgogne." It became later one of the most prosperous cafés in Paris, doing the best business in club-dinners and wedding-feasts. After a period of brilliant success, it fell back into obscurity, like so many nations, men and things. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

It was to Legrand's restaurant "Les Vendanges de Bourgogne" that Maricot took us. It was a fine morning, our table was laid in the garden, and as we had come early, before the rush of customers, we were served quickly and well.

We had swallowed our oysters. Happy time, when there were oysters for all, just as now-a-days there are newspapers for all. We were beginning to tackle the kidneys, when an old man, whose hair was a dirty white and whose nose was the colour of a beetroot, suddenly appeared in the entrance to our arbour, and addressed us, in a hoarse voice, as follows:

"Well done, young men. Celebrate Comus and Bacchus. Nothing in this world is true but pleasure. As to the rest, Fame, Fortune, Love, bah! They're worth nothing. Eat and drink. But, if you want to be good fellows, give me a glass of white wine. I am fond of it, of white wine. And I havn't a half-penny this morning, to buy myself a glass of white wine. Just fancy. To answer to the name of Dor-

vigny, to be thirsty and not to have a farthing!"

We had all been on the point of ejecting this strange old beggar, but when we heard his name, we thought better of it. Dorvigny, it was Dorvigny who stood before us! Dorvigny, the author of the *Désespoir de Jocrisse*, of *Janot ou les Battus patient l'Amende*, of *Blaise le Hargneux*, of *Les Tu et les Toi* and of so many other pieces which had been played hundreds of times. We looked at him with curiosity and with pity also, for his appearance, both in face and in form, was altogether a wretched one. His eyes alone, though dimmed by chronic drunkenness, had retained their look of humour and intelligence. There was still a little flame aglow in this brain which had been exhausted by so many debauches.

The waiter, who had seen the old man sidling into our arbour, rushed forward to turn him out. We interfered.

"This gentleman is one of our friends," said Pâris. "He is good enough to take a glass of wine with us, *en passant*."

Dorvigny shrugged his shoulders, as the waiter withdrew.

"The scoundrels," he said, in a tone which Frederick Lemaître afterwards used in his part in *L'Auberge des Adrets*. "The scoundrels. I am one of the foundation-stones of their pothouse. I take my food here, I work here, I would even sleep here if they would let me, and they have no more respect

for me than they have for a street arab. Well, gentlemen, here's to your health. Their Chablis is not too bad, though they don't know how to clarify it. Look at it, it isn't clear, it's not as limpid as it should be. But, brrr!...it goes down all the same."

"Do you live in this quarter, M. Dorvigny?" I asked.

"Yes, my young friend, I live opposite the barracks over the Luquet dancing-rooms, but I am going to move shortly. In the morning there is the drum and the trumpet and in the evening the fiddles and the flutes and that worries me."

"And you still go on working."

"Of course. I write plays for Ribié, the director of the Gaîté. But Ribié is a stingy curmudgeon. Formerly he used to pay me sixty francs for a vaudeville in one act, but now he only pays me forty—and wants to put his name to them into the bargain. Stingy and conceited. I'll send him to the devil. A second go of Chablis, gentlemen—I can't walk on one leg—and then I'll leave you to lunch in quiet."

"Oh, you are not the least in our way, Monsieur Dorvigny. It's always a pleasure to talk with a man of intellect."

Dorvigny shook his head.

"Intellect," he cried. "What's the use of having intellect. It only serves to put money into other people's pockets."

"That's true," said I. "Nicolet ought to have left you an annuity, when he died. You helped him

to earn enough money, for that."

"I have no complaint to make about Nicolet. Nicolet was a good-hearted man. He never refused me the price of a bottle. And then he was jolly, and even if he did sweat me at times, he was always funny. As for that beast Ribié, he always looks as if he would burst out crying over each miserable crown-piece that one squeezes out of him."

"But," said Pâris, "if the reports about your birth are true — as I am assured they are — I am surprised, my dear Monsieur Dorvigny, that—were it only in consideration for the noble blood which flows in your veins—certain persons—of the highest standing—should allow you to work for a living at your age. I am well aware that obliged by circumstances to live away from their native country, it may be difficult for these persons to give you direct proofs of—the interest they take in you ; yet, after all, they are rich and if they were to send you a hundred pieces of gold every year it wouldn't ruin them and it would help you to live."

This muddled speech of Pâris, was an allusion to a belief of very old standing in Paris, that Dorvigny was the natural son of Louis XV. This belief was based on his extraordinary resemblance to that king. If such was the case, he never seemed to have had much reason to bless his stars in having a king for a father, for he had always been a poor man, earning his living at the theatres, as author or actor.

One thing is certain, namely, that whilst my friend

was talking to him about the noble blood which flowed in his veins, Dorvigny's face showed how little pleased he was to hear this subject discussed. Pâris noticed what impression he had made, and mumbled out his last sentence. As for Maricot and myself, we both felt ill at ease as we saw the old man so suddenly turning grave and sad. However, the situation did not last long.

Dorvigny had swallowed his second glass of *Chablis*. Setting his glass down on the table, he tapped Pâris on the shoulder with the tips of his fingers and said :

"Intelligent youth loves to learn, but sage old age loves not to speak. And in any case, my young friend, you must admit that were I—what you think I am, it would not be very seemly of me to boast about it at this time of day."

Pâris was about to speak, but Dorvigny continued:

"You seem to be three charming young fellows—and it remains for me to thank you for your courtesy. It will be my turn next, some day when I have some money. And so, a very good-day. Should you happen to meet Ribié you can tell him he is a curmudgeon and that I would rather die of hunger than continue to write plays for him at forty francs a piece!"

Dorvigny had gone away.

"It would appear," said Maricot, "that the son of the 'Well-Beloved' does not much care to hear his

descent discussed."

"Which is a proof that he really is his son," said I. "He keeps his pride even in his destitution."

"Yes," said Pâris, "and I am very sorry that I touched on a subject which offends him, as it appears."

"All the same, gentlemen, we must admit, that whether he is the son of a king or of a boot-blacker, it is a wretched end for a man of talent, such as Dorvigny was, to go begging for drinks from strangers, in a greasy coat and without uppers to his boots."

"If I were a rich man, I would place Dorvigny in a hospital."

"Where he wouldn't remain a week," said Maricot. "To live, he must have wine, not herb-tea, and he would far rather sleep in the gutter than in a good bed."

Maricot was in the right. Two or three months later, some actors generously subscribed to a fund got up on his behalf by Brunet, and Dorvigny, having a couple of hundred francs in his pocket, drank enough brandy to kill him, and did kill himself. Maricot was quite right.

I have related how, after having in vain pursued that timid bird called a publisher, I put away *My Wife's Child* at the bottom of a cupboard, and left it there for two years.

During two years, indeed, discouraged by the

want of success which had attended my first literary effort, I did not write a single line elsewhere than at my office. I had broken my pen as a novelist, and had no thoughts of taking a fresh one to myself. It would, however, be a mistake to think that my grief, at the annihilation of my literary dreams, had any influence on my character during these two years. I was born with a great stock of philosophy. I never made long speeches—as under similar circumstances I have heard so many people do—when ever a misfortune or a worry has assailed me. I have always tried to ward off the one, to forget the other, and I always succeeded in so doing. Thus, when I was eighteen years old, I hawked my first book round fifteen different publishers' shops. None of these gentlemen would have anything to do with it, they had no confidence in my budding talents. All right, to the devil with literature. To the devil, for a time. For, of course, I had not given up all hope for ever. No ; I imitated those gamblers, who, when they see that the luck is against them, do not fight it, but prudently withdraw, and whilst awaiting the smiles of Fortune, make haste to hide their cash. Glory repulsed me—so I consoled myself for the disdain of Glory with the smiles of Love.

I have no intention of relating all my love adventures as a young man in this book. Not that I am ashamed of them ; on the contrary, I am outspoken and I say that I always remember them with pleasure. I have a far greater esteem for Anacreon, who,

at eighty, sang of Venus, than I have for Origen who at twenty, sacrificed his manhood so as to be able to teach religion, without diversions, to women and maidens. But I know what a prudish age this is. It is not to-day that I should venture to publish my *La Pucelle de Belleville*. Oh! Oh! The virtuous journalists, beginning with M. Veuillot, would not have stones enough in their bags wherewith to stone me to death. However, as I imagine that *The Memoirs of Paul de Kock* without some light stories would seem as much an anomaly as an article by one of the journalists in question without impertinent or insolent remarks, I would crave permission to relate, as occasion may present itself, some of the most amusing of the gallant adventures which have befallen me. But don't be afraid. You won't have to hide under the table to read them. A light story is quite a different thing from an indecent story. My pen may have often been light, it has never been immoral. And with all deference to M. Veuillot, I may remark that a Pope in person—Gregory XVI—was of this opinion and showed it by taking pleasure in reading my novels.

In its proper place, I will give some curious evidence—which nobody has yet heard—to prove this statement.

What oratorical precautions to apologize that, an old man, I remember the time when I was young! But it is once for all, and henceforward I shall follow my path in this book without troubling myself

any more about my censors. I was going to write *gêneurs*, a new word. It's a good word. Let us turn our backs on censors and *gêneurs* alike.

Well, then, during two years, from the autumn of 1811 to the autumn of 1813, I did no literary work of any sort, but gave myself entirely up to my pleasures, as far, of course, as was allowed of by my occupations as a bank clerk and by the extent of my moderate means. But I am one of those who hold that it is by no means indispensable to be rich to enjoy oneself, and that, especially with women, a man who is young, good-looking and jolly, and fairly clever, has as good a chance as a man with a bag of gold. At least it was so in my time. Perhaps, things have changed since then. So many things have changed since then. If this is true in this respect also, well, all I can say is that I am sorry for our young men, and for the women too.

I may say it now. I was good-looking when I was a young man. I was not tall, and people used to complain that when walking, I carried my head on one side, but I was slender, slim. Too slim perhaps, and for many years my people thought I should go off in a consumption. Well, such as I was, women did not throw their arms round my neck at first sight, but once they had done so they seemed to like to stay there. One of my favourite places, for hunting up female acquaintances, was the Tivoli. It was a garden the like of which is no more to be found in Paris. Are there many people living who re-

member it? I do not think so, for it is now more than forty years since it was closed. The Tivoli was situated on the site where that block of houses now stands, which is near the Havre railway-station, on the right as one comes from the boulevard. One reached it by the Rue St. Lazare, which was formerly the Rue d'Argenteuil et des Porcherons. The entrance cost three francs twelve sous, which, you see, was not ruinous. But, *par exemple*, all the side shows had to be paid for extra, with the exception of the fireworks and the Théâtre Bobèche. One paid extra for the swings, of which there was a great variety, for the merry-go-rounds, the Egyptian Birds, and the switchback railway. Oh, the switchback railway, I was crazy about it, and spent all my money in rides. There was also a man who made grimaces. Grimacers were fashionable at that time —are they not so still? The Tivoli *grimacier* was a jolly fellow. He wore a white wig and played the trumpet and the violin. There was also a fortuneteller, a sorcerer, perched up in a hermitage, and an artist with scissors who lived in a hut and cut out silhouette-portraits. In my book *Mon Voisin Raymond* I have related the misadventures of the said Raymond, who is forced to hide for three hours in the studio of the silhouette-cutter, to escape the pursuit of the man with the Egyptian Bird, whose eye he had knocked out. The incident is a true one, by the way, as are almost all the incidents which I have related in my novels. What comic scenes I

witnessed at Tivoli. What funny things I heard in the crowds which thronged the illuminated walks, or, better still, amongst the couples in the arbours. And when the fireworks began, what cries of joy which often ended in cries of terror. A rocket falling on a lady's shawl, or bonnet—! And the ball! Ah, as to public balls as they were then, nobody can contest the superiority of the past over the present. No doubt it was a very mixed company at the Tivoli dances; one didn't meet noble lords and ladies there, but whatever the people may have been—lower middle-class folk or shop-keepers in their Sunday clothes, with their good ladies, shop-boys and grisettes—if there was nothing distinguished about them, there was also nothing low. Everybody danced decently, heartily, if not elegantly. Even the ladies of light virtue, the *demi-vertus* or *demi-castors* as they were called in those days, those whom one now calls *cocottes*, who frequented the Tivoli gardens, behaved themselves respectably. One could join in a quadrille with them, without having to blush for one's partner's sense of decency.

I was fond of dancing, and especially of waltzing, when I was twenty years old. I could have danced a whole hour without stopping, timing myself by my watch. Unfortunately, few are the women who waltz well, or at least so it was in 1812 at the Tivoli. So, before asking a woman, or a girl to waltz with me, I always used to watch her first as she waltzed with somebody else.

It was in this way that one evening, I noticed a woman whom I did not remember to have ever seen before at this ball. Her appearance was out of the common. She was dark ; twenty-five or thirty years old, had beautiful eyes, a small foot, magnificent hair and was dressed with taste, if without *recherche*. And how she waltzed ! She was a living teetotum. Oh, her partner was not at all up to her mark. It was he who had to give in first, to beg for mercy. I saw her smile contemptuously.

"Tired already, monsieur ? Very well, let us stop."

He led her back to her seat. I sprang forward.

"Madame, if you are not tired, I don't tire, not I."

She looked me up and down and I will wager that she guessed that my talents were on a par with my boldness. Great minds understand each other at first sight. Without saying a word, she left the arm of her broken-winded partner and took mine, and off we went like a whirlwind.

To make a long story short, my partner was as satisfied with me as I with her, and so, not only did we waltz, but danced all other dances together all the evening, and when the ball was over, we took it as a matter of course that I should offer to see her home, and that she should accept my escort.

She had come to the Tivoli with a lady friend who left us at the Faubourg Montmartre, and as she lived in the Rue de Grenelle-Saint-Honoré, we had plenty of time to talk as we walked along. I had offered to take a cab, but she preferred to walk. She

was married, her name was Madame O....., her husband had been a sailor, he was twenty years her senior and spent his days and nights at the café. She had only been living in Paris for three months, before that she had lived at Havre. Having heard of the Tivoli, she had been tempted to go there and she did not regret it at all, as she had enjoyed herself very much.

*Dénouément* of the evening: Madame O... was at the door of her house, a house where there was a newspaper printing office.

"Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you again, Madame?"

"Certainly, whenever you please, monsieur."

"As your husband is always away from home, mayn't I pay you a little call—to-morrow, or the day after?"

"I shall be most glad to see you."

It went as smoothy as our waltz. I was delighted, and the next evening at seven o'clock I presented myself at Madame O...’s.

It was an apartment on the third floor, and well furnished. The old sailor must have been a man of means. What struck me principally was an ornament in the drawing-room, which lay between the bedrooms of Madame and Monsieur—they slept apart. It was a trophy of every kind of weapon used by the savages, and hung against the wall. By Jove, what a collection of swords and arrows, of spears and knobkerries. M. O... had brought them all

back on his voyages from the Indies. They were superb.

"And a good half of these weapons are poisoned," said Madame O....

Poisoned! What delightful knick-knacks. She had sent her servant away on my arrival, telling her she should not want her again till the morning. So we were alone. I was in love. Time went rapidly by and when the clock struck eleven, I could not believe my ears. I had fancied it was not yet eight.

However, if I had every reason to believe that my feelings were reciprocated, I had as yet no right to sing of victory. And so, great was my distress, when, seeing how late it was, I decided to go. Twiddling my hat in my fingers, I kept looking round the room, which it seemed, I must leave: disconsolate, my gaze rested especially upon a bed hung with blue curtains, on which, hitherto, my aspirations had centred.

Madame O... laughed.

"Oh, look here," I said, "you are very cruel. You don't love me."

"Oh indeed! And why don't I love you?"

"Because you let me go."

"Oh! You would like to stay perhaps."

"Why, of course! Since your husband has his own bedroom, and since, every night, as you tell me, he comes home half-drunk..... where's the danger, even though I stay the whole night with you?"

"You're mad."

"There's a printing office downstairs and so the front-door remains open all night: at dawn I could easily slip out without being noticed by the porter. He would take me for one of the compositors."

"You are mad, I tell you."

"I am not mad in the least. When does your husband usually come in?"

"At midnight. And you see the way the rooms are arranged: he's got to cross through mine to get to his."

"Well, what of that! We'll put out the candle, and draw the bed-curtains: your husband will believe you are asleep. Besides, as I said before, as he is always drunk, he won't trouble himself about you. He'll go straight to his own room—

"Eh Coralie, (Coralie was the Christian name of my little waltzer) my pretty Coralie, won't you..."

Between ourselves, it was for pure form that I spoke to her like this, a lover's braggadocio. I liked her very much, but not so much as to care to risk my life for her. I implored her with such ardour because I was convinced that she would refuse me. I was merely playing a scene out of a novel in the style of *Faublas*. Imagine my astonishment when suddenly clasping my head in her two hands, Madame O... cried out:

"All right. I agree, you little monster. Stay."

I must have turned pale, but Madame O... did not notice it. She put out the candles. There was no

drawing back now, and certainly I didn't draw back... In five minutes I had rejoined her beneath the curtains.

What sort of woman then was this creature, who didn't shrink from receiving in her arms, in her bed... a lover, when her husband's room was but a step away. And what a lover! a young fellow whom she had known for four-and-twenty hours! For those who moralize, the answer does not admit of doubt: this woman was a libertine of the worst kind. As for me, who am naturally inclined to look upon all human weaknesses with indulgence, I am content to say that madame O... was nothing more than a silly creature, who acted as she did without thinking, and, observe—I speak from experience *in animâ rili*, let it be noted—who yielded in this circumstance to a caprice of her mind rather than to the impulse of her passions. There are more women in the world than one imagines, who have resembled, and who will resemble Madame O... in this respect.

However that may be, I must, at the risk of giving a sorry opinion of my juvenile courage, avow that I found this night singularly long. As far as I was concerned, the pleasure was no compensation for my anxiety. And it was less during the hours of the night that this anxiety tormented me. The husband had returned, as was his wont, at midnight, and, with a step heavy from drink, although endeavouring to go lightly so as not to dis-

turb a slumber which was dear to him, having crossed through madame's bed-room, had reached his own bed, where doubtless he hadn't delayed to stretch himself, and fall asleep. But when the first gleam of dawn began to whiten the casement, warning me that the moment had come to slip away, I began to feel extremely uneasy. Madame O... gazed at me, as I dressed myself, and smiled. But I!... I didn't smile; I was seized with an attack of the shivers, and my heart beat rapidly.

I put on my breeches, my waist-coat, and my coat. I arranged my tie, and seized my hat. But I didn't put on my boots...

"And your boots," said Coralie.

"I'll put them on outside... on the landing."

"You are right: they might make a noise on the floor. Although when *he* is asleep... Oh! there's no danger! One might fire off a cannon in his room, and it wouldn't wake him!"

There was no danger... possible not, but all the same I was none the less anxious to get away. Madame O... got up in order to accompany me as far as the door on the landing, and to shut it after me.

We must have formed a curious group, she, in her chemise, I, dressed, and holding my boots in my hand. And, as we crept along on tiptoe, do you know of what I was thinking? I was thinking of the panoply of Indian weapons, of the poisoned lances and arrows. Behind me, I imagined Monsieur O... springing up all at once, brandishing a formidable

bow ; I heard the whiz of an assagai, and I felt the sharp point sink into my shoulders !...

At length I reached the longed-for door !... It opened.

"I'll see you again to-night, shan't I ?" said Coralie to me in a low voice.

"Yes, yes ! to-night."

"Ah, ah ! to-night !... wait for me under the ivy bough ! Enough to have played for once a game like this, many thanks ! It was only when I had put on my boots that I breathed again. And when I was in the street, ah... I was ready to dance, to sing, to embrace all the sweepers and ragpickers whom I met.

Pâris, to whom I related my adventure, said : "That woman deserves to be flogged in a public place !" Perhaps that was too severe, although, mad as I had been, she was much to blame. I need hardly say that I never saw her again. Stay, yes, I did once, three or four years later. It was at the Gaîté theatre, and she was accompanied by some old gentleman, her husband no doubt. As she passed me in the *foyer*, she cast a glance of withering contempt at me. No doubt she thought I had behaved like a coward. I did not mind her look in the least. She may have regretted that I had not stayed to be killed, I, for my part, was delighted to be still in the land of the living.

## CHAPTER V

*My Wife's Child* still. — A bank clerk his own publisher. — From seven to eight hundred francs to be procured. — A mirage. — Twenty napoleons destined to the gambling table. — Intervention of my stepfather. — The *Cercle des Etrangers*. — Money won. — Money lost. — How my first novel at last saw the light of day. — Kind friends. — A halting success. — Only four dozen copies. — Should I write a second novel. — A lucky meeting. — Caigniez. — A stop at the *Rocher de Cancale*. — Should I become a dramatic author? — The Caveau in 1814. — The Chevalier de Piis. — Armand Gouffé. — Brazier. — Eusèbe Salverte. — De Jouy. — Désaugiers. — Théaulon. — Béranger. — Story of my first song: *le Chevalier errant*. — A Meeting with Martainville. — An improvised play. — A roll of blank paper. — A literary man's little joke. — Corsse, the millionaire director. — What Napoleon used to be called in 1814. — Four melodramas in two years. — The first performance of *Madame de Valnoir*. — The man who triumphed in spite of himself. — Parisians, weathercocks. — Villeneuve. — "You have come to do the same as I."

It was during the autumn of 1813 that I was once more bitten with literary ambition. I had got more and more sick of my office, and, in spite of what my mother had said, I could see no prospects there. To be just, I must add that my mother also began to see

that I should never make a fortune in that business. The little fortune, thanks to which my stepfather had been able to liberate me from military service, twice in six months, had put us all in more comfortable circumstances, for my mother had taken care to put a part of it out of the reach of M. Gaigneau, who would have risked it all at the tables. Under these circumstances, I had the right to hope that my mother would not object to my throwing up my clerkship, provided I had some first literary success to back me up.

But how was I to make this success, seeing that the publishers would not publish my novel?

Such was my thought, one evening as I was turning over the leaves of my manuscript, which I had taken out of the cupboard where it had been growing more and more yellow for the past two years. As I complacently read over certain passages I kept repeating—like Galileo repeating his famous *E poi se muove*—: “All the same it’s not at all bad. Much worse stuff than this has been printed.”

Printed? But what might it cost after all to print a two volume novel, say an edition of five hundred copies. I thought that five hundred copies would be enough for a first edition. Six or seven hundred francs. At six francs the copy—allowing the booksellers a third as discount—that would mean a profit of thirteen or fourteen hundred francs, provided all the edition was sold. And why should it not be sold? There was a bookseller, called Pigoreau, who would

place the book at the shops, in return for a small commission, if I brought it to him printed. He had offered to do so, this excellent Pigoreau.

Yes, but where was I to find the seven hundred francs wanted by the printer.

I had just received my salary that day ; ten bright new gold coins. To think that with little more than treble that amount, I could command the public ear, the press. Take a first step, perhaps, towards the temple of Fame !

I was tossing the coins in the hollow of my hand, in a melancholy manner, dreaming these day-dreams ; an exercise, alas, which did not increase their number. Suddenly a light broke in on me. An evil light I admit, but, in a desperate case, one takes what light one can. I had never set foot in a gambling-house, what was to prevent me from trying to get the money I wanted at such a place.

But of all resources gambling is the most deceptive, the least reliable. Had not this been proved to me thousands of time by the thousand battles lost a thousand times, by M. Gaigneau, on the green cloth ? It is true, my stepfather lost oftener than he won, but then he was almost a professional gambler, and Fate, tired of her constant struggles with him, turned her back on him, nine times out of ten. I, on the contrary, was only a gambler by chance. And whether lucky or not, I swore it, I would never gamble again after that once. And who knows ? "Full hands to the innocent," says a proverb. Who knows

but that my very want of experience, my clumsiness, would not propitiate Fortune in my favour.

I put my two hundred francs in my pocket and I set out, along the boulevards, to the Palais-Royal.

I was passing the Porte Saint-Denis, when I heard myself called by a voice which I knew well. It was my stepfather on his way home from his office.

"Where are you off to so fast?"

"I... I... I've got an appointment."

"Oh. Is your mother at home?"

"Yes. That is to say... I don't know. Stop, yes, I think that she is."

I was confused. My conscience was pricking me. M. Gaigneau noticed it, for he continued:

Come, what is the matter with you, Paul, this evening? You don't look the same as usual. Has something gone wrong? Tell me all about it, my boy."

M. Gaigneau spoke affectionately, and put his arm in mine. After all, my stepfather was no Cato—very far from it. If I confessed what my plan was, he might give me some good advice, nobody would do so better.

"Well, dear father," I said. "You must not scold me. I'll tell you all about it. I must absolutely have seven hundred francs and I am going to try and win them at roulette."

M. Gaigneau gave a start.

"What, you wretch, you are going to gamble?"

"Oh."

"Yes, I know that I have no right to preach you a sermon on the vice of gambling."

"Oh. I didn't mean to say that, Papa. Whatever you may do, you have a perfect right to try and prevent me from making a fool of myself. But as I say, I must have seven hundred francs."

"Seven hundred francs? What for?"

"To print my novel. The publishers reject it. I want to do without the publishers. You see, once *My Wife's Child* is printed, people will be forced to read it."

"Forced, eh? Well, so you hope, my boy, and I'd far rather see you spend your money in that way than wasting it in other kinds of folly. You'll always get something more for your money. And what capital have you got to try for seven hundred francs?"

"I have two hundred francs. My salary, which I have just received."

"Two hundred. Yes, one can do something at the tables with two hundred francs. And where did you mean to try your luck?"

"As to that, I am not quite sure. It's the first time, you see, that . . . . I had been thinking of No. 113, or Frascati's."

"Frascati's. No; no! Don't go to Frascati's. It's too dangerous there for young players. There are women there, and at your age, women are in the way. You had better go to the Palais-Royal,

or better still . . . . But no, you haven't been introduced, so they wouldn't let you in at the Cercle des Etrangers."

"Is that a decent place, the Cercle des Etrangers?"

"It's the best place of the kind; the best kept and the most genuine. It's kept by an ex-chamberlain of the Emperor, the Marquis de Cussy."

"And do you go to the Cercle des Etrangers?"

"Yes, sometimes, when I'm in funds. And I've often enough been lucky there."

"Oh, indeed."

"But even the best of these houses is never worth anything. I think, I ought to know, and if you're wise . . . ."

"Dear father!..."

"No, you don't want to be wise. You have made up your mind to risk your two hundred francs. All right. Now a thought has struck me, it's a plan and perhaps it's a plan that you won't approve of. Never mind, I'll tell it to you, all the same."

"I am all ears."

"You have never gambled, therefore you don't know how to gamble. And besides you are nervous, impressionable and would play badly. You would lose."

"But don't people say that those who play for the first time . . . ."

"Always win. That's silly talk for silly people. No, no, Fortune is by no means so gracious as that towards novices; or else all novices would have a dead

certain chance, and could break all the banks in turn. There is a certain art in gambling, one must have a certain amount of *sang-froid*. One must calculate, on the bases of the probabilities. Of course in spite of all that, one is never certain of . . . ”

“And what’s your plan, Papa?”

“Oh, my plan. It’s very simple. A thing that happens often, very often. Oh, people notice it every day—is that when a player is playing on somebody else’s behalf, with somebody else’s money—he wins.”

“Oh, indeed?”

“You trust me?”

“Of course. How can you ask me?”

“Well, you trust me with your two hundred francs. I go to the Cercle des Etrangers. You walk up and down outside, and wait for me. I play—prudently, but, of course, not like a coward, just as if I were playing on my own account. And I swear to you, do you hear me, Paul, I swear to you on my honour—that as soon as I have won a thousand francs—seven hundred francs, you know, isn’t a round sum—I’ll bring them to you. Well, what do you say?”

I hesitated, not that I had any fear of M. Gaigneau, but because I did not quite like to risk my ten napoleons and perhaps to lose them, without even having the excitement of staking them. But then it struck me that this very excitement might be my undoing.

“All right,” I said.

Without exchanging another word, we walked with rapid strides to the Rue de Richelieu, to the Cercle des Etrangers, which was not far from Frascati's.

M. Gaigneau remained there an hour—an hour which seemed to me as long as a century. Ah! the prettiest woman on earth might have smiled at me as she passed, during that hour, I should have paid no more attention to her than to a hunchback. At last, as, quite worn out with anxiety, I had sat down on the opposite side of the street, I saw my step-father come out. He looked pale and upset and it was with a very mournful expression that he came up to me.

"Well?"

"Well, poor old chap, it wasn't my fault, but..."

A cloud came over my eyes and my heart sank. My *Child* would have to go back to its cupboard.

But, mastering my emotion, I cried out :

"All right. Let's say nothing more about it, Papa."

"Oh," cried M. Gaigneau, suddenly changing his expression and his tone, "you are too good, Paul, and it's a shame to tease you any longer. I have won your thousand francs."

"Is it true? Are you sure it's true? You're not... you're not laughing at me?"

"Heaven forbid. Let's go into a café and I'll give you your money."

Resigned as I had been in adversity, I was nearly mad with joy. Hidden away in a corner of a café

with my stepfather, I did not tire of looking at my thousand francs. As a matter of fact, I had twelve hundred francs, for my stepfather had won the thousand francs over and above my stake. So I was richer than I had wanted to be. I was too rich.

"I only wanted seven hundred francs," I said to M. Gaigneau, "and I have twelve hundred. It's only fair that you should keep five hundred."

"No, no; it's all yours."

"I beg of you."

"Not at all, my boy. It's better to have more than less when you are publishing a book. There may be expenses which you have not thought of."

"Well, I'll keep nine hundred francs and you shall take three hundred."

"No, I tell you."

"Yes, or I shall get angry."

M. Gaigneau pocketed the three hundred francs.

"Very well," he said, "I'll take them and do you know why I take them? It's because I'm quite sure of being able to give you them back in an hour, after having won another thousand."

"Oh, do you think so?"

"I'm in luck to-night. I feel it. And I can tell you, it cost me something to leave the tables just now. But, you see, I had sworn it. Wait for me here. Wait for me, I shan't be long."

How could I say "Be careful, Fortune is fickle," to a man who had just made me so happy? Besides, to tell the truth, I did not think that M. Gaigneau

would lose.

He was not long, indeed. I had just time to jot down a few figures concerning my publishing scheme, and to take a *riz-au-lait*, when I saw him coming back.

He tried to smile.

"You have won?"

He shook his head. I thought he was joking again.

. "Come, tell me the truth."

"I have lost it all, my friend. Oh! that's the truth this time. Psiiit, in five goes, it was all cleared out. But that was inevitable and I ought to have thought of it. I had broken the run of luck by leaving the table and couldn't join the broken ends again."

I felt in my pockets.

"Will you..."

"What?"

"Will you let me give you another two hundred francs?"

M. Gaigneau put out his hand with a rapid gesture. But the man, the father, the friend was ashamed of this movement, and warding me off :

"No," he said quickly. "That's enough. Pay the waiter and let us go home to bed. It's quite late enough."

And whilst I was paying the waiter, he started out of the café; no doubt to escape the temptation. I only caught up with him on the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle.

Let us finish the story of the publication of my first novel—a story which I have perhaps already spun out too much. But, gentle reader, you must pardon me. Poor as that book is, it was the starting-point of my career, and if you have given me reason to congratulate myself on having become a novelist, it would be ungrateful on my part to despise my beginnings, inglorious as they were.

I had my book printed by a printer in the Rue de Turenne. Each copy of the five hundred, including stitching and covers, cost me eight pence a volume. My thousand volumes, accordingly, cost me eight hundred francs. Then there was the discount to the booksellers, besides Pigoreau's commission, and besides that, a quantity of general expenses which I had not thought of, for instance, the carriage of the books to the shops, two presentation copies to each of the principal newspapers. If I wanted the journalists to speak of my book, I had, of course, to let them know of it: In one word, I might think myself very lucky, if after selling the whole edition, I got my money back again. And that did not allow for a dozen copies which I had kept for my friends and acquaintances.

It was just the distribution of these twelve copies which caused me the most annoyance. My mother and my stepfather gave me some words of praise, and so did Pâris and Maricot. But the others!

"Oh, that's by you, is it. Oh, indeed. So you want to become a famous man? Humph, a difficult

task, my dear boy. You know the saying : *Non licet omnibus adire Corinthum.*"

"*My Wife's Child.* I don't like that title. It's not in good taste."

"Are there any ghosts, any spooks in your novel? I don't care about anything else?"

"I have read your book, my dear Paul ; it's funny. But be careful, you have a tendency to sail too near the wind, and a writer who does not respect his readers, you know, will never be more than a third-rate author."

And then the remark of a gallant lady, whom I was courting at the time, and to whom I had carried my book with all haste, as soon as it left the printers, thinking that would help on my suit : "I must say, you're very good to take the trouble to write books like this." This "you're very good" seemed to me so stupid, that it dealt a death-blow to my love.

I went every day to Pigoreau's to hear how it was selling. Four dozen copies were sold the first week. I was in ecstasies. There was no doubt about it, the edition would be exhausted in two months. But, the second week, only two dozen were sold, and only one dozen, the third. And, after that, no more dozens at all ; only one or two copies, here and there. In my enthusiasm, I had sketched out a second novel : *Georgette, ou la Nièce du tabellion*, but this knocked my enthusiasm on the head. What was the use of writing, if nobody read me? I was all the

more upset, because, in the first transports of my joy at having sold four dozen copies, I had thrown up my place at the bank. Could a famous novelist remain a petty bank-clerk? Yes, but the petty bank-clerk was earning two hundred francs a month, and the novelist—whilst awaiting his fame—was earning nothing at all.

I was moodily returning one evening from Pigoreau's, when, as I was walking down the Rue Montorgueil, I met Caigniez, celebrated at that time as the author of a number of melodramas which rivalled, as successes, those of Guilbert de Pixérécourt. Caigniez used to be called the *Racine* and *Pixérécourt*, the *Corneille* of the boulevard. Racine-Caigniez was a little man, about fifty years old, gentle and unassuming. He was fond of me, because, one day, in telling him how I had seen one of his first pieces *la Forêt enchantée ou la Belle au bois dormant*, when I was only seven years old—it was a melodrama and fairy-tale combined which had been played at the Gaîté theatre in the Year VIII,—I had quoted at full length some of the verses in it. He was one of the first persons to whom I gave a copy of my book, and he had paid me a compliment about it, which I never forgot.

"One can judge a writer's future by his first book," he said. "Your book is no masterpiece, but it has humour in it. A man who can write like that at eighteen, ought to be a man of talent at thirty."

Caigniez died at an advanced age, for he used to

come and see me at Romainville, as late as 1832 and 1833. I may mention that my wife did not at all care for his coming to our house, and this was the reason. As a young man, the author of *la Pie volleuse* had had the leprosy — yes, the real leprosy—and he took delight in this souvenir ; it seemed interesting to him to be perhaps the only Parisian who could *boast* of having been a leper. It was an old man's craze. At any rate, whenever my wife saw him coming, she used to make a face. It was no use my telling her that there was no danger, that Caigniez had been cured years ago, she was not at her ease, after his departure, till she had washed the hand with which she had shaken his, with quantities of soap and of Eau de Cologne.

To go back to the beginning of 1814, when I met Caigniez in the Rue Montorgueil.

"Well," he said, "and how's your *Child* going?"

"So, so, Monsieur Caigniez. It's true, that Pigoreau tells me that the sales of books always fall off in January."

"He's quite right. January is only good for the toy-shops and confectioners."

"And for the theatres."

"Humph. Theatres are beginning badly this year. You see, the political outlook is such a gloomy one, that people have no wish to go to the play. And you, Monsieur de Kock, where are you going now?"

"I'm going home?"

"You haven't dined. Won't you come and dine

with me at Baleine's. Just potluck, you know."

I could not refuse an invitation so cordially made. I followed Caigniez into the Rocher de Cancale, a restaurant at the corner of the Rue Mandar, which had become fashionable since the monthly dinners of the Caveau Moderne had been held there. It happened to be the 20th, the very day on which this club of singers met. People used to fight for the private rooms which adjoined the room reserved for these gentlemen, so as to hear them sing. As an *habitué* of the house and especially as a dramatic author—a qualification held in high esteem by Baleine, Caigniez got one of these private rooms. But it was still early and we had plenty of time to dine and chat before the singing began.

"Why don't you try your hand at writing for the stage, my dear de Kock?" asked Caigniez between the pear and the cheese.

"I am frightened of failing."

"Bah, there's nothing in a melodrama or a vaudeville. It takes months of work to write a novel, whilst a three-act play can be written in three weeks, if one chooses."

"But I don't know any managers."

"You'll get to know them. Corsse, the manager of the Opera Comique, is a very good chap."

"And what about M. Bourguignon, of the Gaîté?"

"Bourguignon is a good fellow also, but he's under his wife's slipper and she's not always very pleasant."

"So it would be better to try something for the

Ambigu?"

"Yes, that would be better than for the Gaîté. Work, and as soon as it's ready, I'll introduce you to Corsse."

"Oh, many thanks in advance."

I was so pleased at the thought of this new opening, that whilst listening in an absent-minded way to the songs of the Caveau people, who had begun to sing, I began to think out the plot of my melodrama. However, the shouts of laughter and the thunders of applause soon brought me back to the attention due to the talents and the fame of the people in the next room. Caigniez, who knew them almost all quite intimately, named each singer, as he heard his voice. There were Piis, who combined his laurels as a singer with his salary as Secretary-General at the Prefecture of Police; Armand Gouffé, who was called the Panard of the XIXth century; Brazier; Eusèbe Salverte, who afterwards abandoned poetry for politics and went into the Chamber on the opposition side; Jouy, who had not yet written *William Tell* with Rossini, but who had already written *La Vestale* and *Fernand Cortez* with Spontini, and *L'Ermité de la Chaussée d'Antin* by himself, two volumes for which the public was fighting at the bookstalls; Rougemont; Désaugiers, the merriest of them all; Théaulon; Béranger, who that night at the general request, sang his *Roi d'Yretot*, a witty criticism on the Emperor's despotic government, a criticism, which, unfortunately, in 1814, sounded more like a

dirge than a skit.

Later on, I made the acquaintance of most of those whom I have named. Indeed, it was at the suggestion of Armand Gouffé—who could be as charming at times as at other times he was bitter and sour—that I also wrote songs. Under the Restoration, notably, I wrote a song, of which no doubt you have never heard, but which, in its day, was played on the barrel organs, not only over all Paris, but throughout the whole of France. Mengal wrote the music, and the tune remained popular at the theatres for years. It was called *le Chevalier errant*, and procured me the honour of a reply, also in verse and to the same tune, from a poet in Bordeaux, who wrote, in the name of the fair sex in his native town—that if my *Chevalier errant* had never met with faithful sweethearts, it was because his travels had never carried him as far as the capital of the Gironde.

This is the first verse of this song.\*

In an old castle of Andalusia,  
In the days when Love was still faithful,  
When beauty, valour and gallantry  
Guided a faithful lover to the fight;  
A brave knight, one evening presented himself,  
With vizor raised and his lance in his hand,  
He comes to ask if his dear lady-love  
Be not perchance, with the lord of the castle.

\* Dans un vieux château de l'Andalousie,  
Au temps où l'amour se montrait constant,  
Où beauté, valeur et galanterie  
Guidaient au combat un fidèle amant;  
Un preux chevalier, un soir se présente,  
Visière levée et lance à la main,  
Il vient demander si sa douce amante  
N'est pas, par hasard, chez le châtelain.

There are four verses. Don't be afraid. I am not going to quote any more. Yet, young man who read me, if your grandfather or grandmother be still alive, lay this verse before her or him, and I will wager, when you see *her* or *him* smile, as he or she hums this sweet souvenir of youthful days, that you will not regret that I spoke to you of my first song.

I was in luck that evening of the 20th January, 1814, for as we were walking home, Caigniez and I, along the boulevards, we were accosted by Martainville, whom I then only knew by reputation, and very proud I was to have a chat with him as we took a glass of punch together at the Café de la Gaîté.

I oughtn't to say, perhaps, that I had a chat with him, because Martainville never let anybody put in a single word. I have met many people who resemble Martainville in this respect in my lifetime. Besides, at twenty, the best thing I could do was to listen, and so I did, accordingly. And, indeed, I had no reason to regret it. What a witty fellow he was ! What high spirits. Funny sayings and comic anecdotes poured from his lips. He was a royalist, as one knows. Already foreseeing at that time, that the Empire would be overthrown, shaken as it was by a series of reverses, he kept pouring out his stinging remarks about "M. de Buonaparte" and all "his humbugging family"— I quote his own words—"who were at last going to be kicked out of France by our legitimate king !" One might gauge the destinies of a government by the more or less reserve with which people

speak of it in public places. Martainville could not have said one half of what he said at the Café de la Gaîté that night, six months earlier, without being arrested.

He left us, as he said, to go and “work at a play which Bourguignon had just ordered.” And Caigniez, watching him as he went, shrugged his shoulders and said :

“What a mad man—a mad man full of talent, who in spite of his worth will die in the gutter. What good will it do him if Louis XVIII “kicks M. de Buonaparte and all his humbugging family out of France?” If Martainville could bring the Bourbons back to the Tuileries in his pocket to-morrow, the Bourbons would have completely forgotten the author of *Le Pied de Mouton* the day after. It’s always a mistake for a light writer to try and play the politician. People won’t admit that a man who yesterday has made them laugh with some silly joke, can talk to them to-morrow of serious matters.”

This was not bad reasoning—you will admit—on the part of a manufacturer of melodramas. And Caigniez’s words were prophetic. Martainville, royalist in spite of everything, Martainville, more royalist than the king himself—made a very bad bargain. He found neither fame nor fortune under the white flag.

I must find place here for two anecdotes about him, not of a political nature, which Caigniez told me. I do not think they are generally known.

Martainville had long promised Ribié, the then manager of the Gaîté, to write him a pantomime, and never did so. One day, being in want of money (he was often taken that way) he called on Ribié and asked him for something on account of the piece.

"I shan't give you anything on account," said the manager, "because you have shown me, over and over again, that bits on account don't bind you in the least, but—to-day is the 10th of the month—come on the 30th and read me the first two acts of your pantomime and I'll pay you, then and there, five hundred francs in advance of royalties."

Martainville reflected a moment. Then he said :

"All right. But I won't come on the 30th, but on the 20th. I can do two acts in ten days."

"Just as you like. I am ready when you are."

At noon on the day appointed, Martainville turns up in the manager's office, where he finds Ribié, with Marty, one of his leading actors, who usually advised him on matters of business. Martainville has the manuscript of his two acts, tied up with a pink ribbon, under his arm. He takes his seat near the window and begins to read. Ribié and Marty, who are sitting near the fire-place, a few-steps off, listen to him and shout with laughter. The first act has been read. Now for the second. Martainville does not stop even to drink the traditional glass of water, so anxious is he to hear the praises of his audience. And praises he receives to his heart's content ; for the second act is at least as good as the first.

As soon as the reading is finished, he rolls up his manuscript and ties the roll up with the pink ribbon.

Ribié and Marty cannot stop laughing. It's charming. It will run a hundred nights. Oh, Martainville must make haste and write the third act.

"You shall have it in a week. And now, my twenty pounds."

"Here they are. Oh, you have kept your word and I'll keep mine."

"Many thanks. *Au revoir.*"

Martainville slips the twenty-five napoleons into his pocket, throws the manuscript down on the table, and darts out, repeating "In a week."

"What a hit! What a hit that will make," continues Ribié, locking up his desk. "I said a hundred nights. It will run three hundred, if only..."

"Hullo! I say!"

"What's up?"

It was Marty who had given this cry. He had untied the pink bow, smoothed out the manuscript and was turning over the pages.

"But what's the matter, I say?" says the manager, springing forward.

"Look here."

Horror! The *manuscript* consists of a number of blank pages of paper, on which not a trace of writing is to be seen. Not a line, not a word, not even a blot.

To get his twenty pounds, Martainville, as he sat there, had improvised the two acts of his pantomime,

prose, verse and scenic effects. He did not write it out till six months later. And Ribié and Marty used to say that when it was written, it was not as good as the piece he had read to them out of his head.

At any rate, the trick, as a literary *tour de force*, was well worth twenty pounds.

The second anecdote is of a rather more *décolleté* nature.

In the summer, during the very hot weather, it was Martainville's habit to dress in the costume of our Father Adam—before the fall. He used to say that his thoughts came all the fresher for it.

One afternoon, a middle-aged lady called on this author, who, as it happened, was without a servant at the time.

Martainville, entirely taken up with his work, goes and opens the door, without thinking of his want of clothing.

The lady runs away, shrieking like a peacock. Still, as she absolutely had to speak to him, she goes to the commissary of the quarter and begs him to go and ask M. Martainville to choose a more suitable costume in which to receive her. The commissaire who knew the author of *Grivoisiana*, goes off, laughing up his sleeve at this fresh eccentricity, and calls on Martainville, whom he finds in the same primitive costume.

"Monsieur Martainville, a complaint has been made against you at my office and I see that it was a well-founded one."

"A complaint? Who has made a complaint? And what about, Monsieur le Commissaire?"

"A lady, who has to talk business with you and who found you, as I find you now."

"Oh, quite right. But what would you have? It's so hot. And besides, hasn't a man a right, in his own house....."

"Certainly a man has a right to dress as he likes in his own house. Still, when somebody calls on business..."

"All right. I'll make that all right, M. le Commissaire, don't you be frightened. Where is the lady, if you please?"

"Down-stairs, waiting for me to tell her when she can come up."

"Tell her she can come up in five minutes. My dress shall be faultless then, I promise you."

"All right."

The commissaire goes down and tells the lady that Martainville will be able to receive her in five minutes. When the five minutes have elapsed, the lady goes upstairs and rings for the second time at Martainville's door.

And for the second time she gives a cry of indignation and hurries away. For she finds Martainville dressed in nothing but an evening coat and a pair of white gloves.

She had come up from the country on behalf of an uncle of his, who, being about to die, wanted to make him his sole heir. Martainville never saw

the lady again and he never saw the legacy either. His joke was an expensive one.

Caigniez had given me three weeks to write a melodrama. I finished it in a fortnight. It is true that I worked my hardest. Its title was *Madame de Valnoir*, and it was taken from Ducray-Duminil's novel. It was in three acts. I copied out the whole of these three acts, in two nights, in my very best writing, and took them to Caigniez, who, good fellow that he was, read them at once. When I next called on him to hear his opinion, he said: "Excellent, excellent. Let's go and see Corsse. He'll play that at once."

Corsse, who, twelve years previously, had made the Ambigu, as an actor in the play of *Madame Angot au sérail* by Aude, had become the manager of this theatre and had made a fortune of about three million francs in it. Corsse was already thinking of retiring, in 1814, and was beginning to leave the management of business matters to his partner, Madame de Puisaye. But he made a point of attending to all new pieces himself. So it was to him that Caigniez took me. He received me even more graciously than I had expected. He professed the highest esteem for Caigniez, who had made him earn a lot of money.

"Have you read the gentleman's play, my friend?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And your opinion is that it has merit, since you are fostering it."

"It's full of merit."

"That's enough. I'll just take a glance at it to see what it's about, and in two or three days we'll begin rehearsing it. Your address is on the manuscript, M. de Kock, I see. I shall write to you, to-morrow, no doubt, to come and arrange the cast with me. Is there a part for Fresnoy?"

"Yes, and there's a very good part also for Villeneuve . . . and a comic part for Raffile."

"Good, good. And the ladies? What's your idea? Madame de Valnoir . . .?"

"That's for Mademoiselle Le Roy."

"Is there nothing for Adèle Dupuis?"

"Oh, yes. There's a part for Mlle. Adèle Dupuis, which I am sure she will like."

"Bravo. You shall have Mlle. Le Roy and Mlle. Adèle Dupuis, Villeneuve, Fresnoy, Raffile. You shall have our best actors and actresses, and it won't be our fault—nor yours either, I'm sure—if *Madame de Valnoir* doesn't make her way. It'll be the fault of that madman, that crackbrained fellow who just now is busy ruining France—and Paris, in consequence."

The "mad man," the "crackbrained fellow," to whom Corsse alluded, was the Emperor. This is, however, spoken of Napoleon I, in Paris, in 1814, after his departure at the end of January, to fight the enemy who was invading France. Out of sight,

out of mind. He was still acclaimed when he was in the Tuileries; people had faith in his star, but, away in Champagne, exhausting himself in efforts of genius and courage to drive the coalized troops off the soil of the fatherland, he was nothing but a "mad man," a "crack-brain," and everyone predicted, I might almost say desired, his fall, blind to the irreparable disasters to all which the ruin of this one man would entail.

I say what I think about public opinion in 1814, as I remember it in writing my memoirs, for I confess it humbly, I troubled my head but little about political matters in 1814. Like Rétif de la Bretonne, author of *Le Paysan perverti*, who, when the Terror was at its height, busied himself only in writing and printing his novels, so I, during the two years 1814 and 1815, of such sad memory since they were the dates of two invasions, thought of nothing but of writing my plays and getting them acted. I was a very bad citizen, it may be said. Not worse than another, for if I had felt myself too weak to defend my country as a soldier, I was at least honest enough not to set myself up as the severe judge of the acts of the man, who, after having governed it gloriously for fourteen years, had cast it down into the abyss, or as the servile flatterer of the man who by a turn of the wheel was called upon to govern France in his place. Besides—and I do not conceal the fact—like my friend Benjamin Antier, I have found politics the stupidest and dullest thing in the world.

I can readily admit that a journalist, a deputy, who makes a name and sometimes a fortune by applauding or vilifying, day by day, such or such a form of government, does not share my opinion ; but if those who live by monarchies or by republics are right—especially when their living is a good one—in booming the one or the other, I hold that those who have nothing to gain, and too often have to lose by changing this for that, are very big fools to trouble about that or this.

Now, because I have always avoided mixing myself in these matters either by thought or deed, does that mean to say that I have remained indifferent to the too numerous revolutions which during the last forty years have in turn upheaved my country. Certainly not. Certain events have grieved me bitterly, whilst certain others on the contrary have pleased me very much. But, sympathy or grief, I have always kept it to myself, expecting as little from the master of whom I approved, as I feared of the master of whom I disapproved.

This digression has once again taken me far away from my subject. But it was necessary all the same for me to explain, how, whilst Napoleon was falling, to make room for Louis XVIII, who soon was to make room again for him and yet again to take his place afresh, I, for my part was writing melodramas.

First of all, *Madame de Valnoir*, performed for the first time on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1814

Then *Catherine de Courlande*, played on the first

of September following.

*La Bataille de Veillane*, played on April 15th, 1815.

And *Le Troubadour portugais* (there's a title for you)—played on November 7th of the same year.

Four melodramas in two years. A melodrama every six months. *Mon Dieu*, yes. And all the four were played at the Ambigu Comique. Corsse and Madame de Puisaye had opened their doors to me, and I had taken up my abode with them. And if it is matter for wonder that whilst France, crushed and bleeding, changed her master four times, and that, whilst twice over the foreigner trod victoriously on the pavement of Paris, there should have been found pens to write melodramas, is it not a matter for still greater wonder that, in this same Paris, a public should have been found to listen to those melodramas and to applaud them? For, of my four plays, two especially were successful: *Madame de Valnoir* and *La Bataille de Veillane*. *Madame de Valnoir*, especially, at the first performance, brought me in for an ovation with which I would gladly have dispensed. You shall hear why.

This first performance took place, as I have said, on March 23rd, 1814, that is to say eight days before the allied troops entered our gates. On the morning of March 23rd, an army of 180,000 men was within sight of Paris, which Marmont and Mortier were preparing to defend, like desperate men, and on the evening of that same day, a new melodrama was

played at the Ambigu-Comique,—and the house was packed.

Bread and shows, *Panem et circenses*, that, it is said, was what the Romans wanted. The Parisians are less exacting. Give them shows and they forget about eating ; they forget even to bemoan their misfortunes.

The play went splendidly from start to finish. Fresnoy, Villeneuve, Joigny were excellent. Raffle was delightful. Mademoiselle Le Roy, in the third part, as a traitress, was magnificent. Mademoiselle Adèle Dupuis, as the persecuted victim, was touching enough to melt rocks to tears.

This of course, is what I thought in 1814. And, to tell the truth, the actors of those days were well worth those of the present time. They had also the advantage of being infinitely less conceited than their successors of the present day.

I was in the seventh heaven of delight. After the first and second acts, I had not words of praise enough to bestow on the eminent performers of my play ; after the third act I was anxious to twine wreaths for their brows. Wreaths for the gentlemen and kisses for the ladies. That is quite the usual thing, from author to actresses, after a successful first night, and there was one young lady especially, a Mlle. Eleonore, whom I was particularly anxious to reward in this way.

We had come to the last scene. In a few minutes all would be over and nothing would be left to be

done, except to announce, in the midst of unanimous applause, that “the piece which we have had the honour of performing to-night is by——” My name ! I was to hear my name proclaimed. At this thought my heart beat so fast that I could hardly breathe.

The piece ends with this *tirade*, addressed by Count Albert de Rivebelle to Timon Vaklin.

“Excellent old man, I hope that you will not leave us. We will endeavour, by our tenderness and by our affection, to bring you to forget your misfortune in having given to the world *such a monster as the one from whom we are so fortunately delivered*.

At these words, said by Villeneuve, who was playing *Count Albert de Rivebelle*, it was not applause which broke out in the theatre, but yells and howls of approval. What does that mean ? I listen, from my place in the wings, to these frenzied shouts and am stupefied. The curtain falls. The author is called for amidst shouts and stampings of feet. The curtain is raised. Fresnoy goes up to the prompter’s box.

“Gentlemen, the piece which we have had the honour of performing to-night, is by M. Paul de Kock.”

“Bravo ! Bravo ! Long live Paul de Kock. Bring him out. Let us see the author.”

Villeneuve came up to me laughing.

“They want to see me,” I stammered, “and what for. It’s not the usual thing, is it?”

“No it’s not, except when the play is quite exceptionally good.”

"Well."

"Well, my dear Sir, your play is thought exceptionally good, it appears—and do you know why. It's because of the last sentence. 'We will try to bring you to forget the misfortune of having given to the world *such a monster as the one from whom we are so fortunately delivered.*'"

"I don't take you."

"Don't you see that the audience sees in this sentence, an allusion to the *tyrant*, to the *Corsican ogre*, defeated by the allied troops, who, as everybody hopes, will never set foot in Paris again."

"Ah, mon Dieu! But I never dreamt of any such allusion."

"I believe you. But you see the audience saw it, and that is why they want to show you their gratitude. Eh, Eh. Do you hear them. They are calling you. You can't disappoint them, my dear Sir. You must go and enjoy your triumph."

Villeneuve began leading me on to the stage.

"No," I cried, freeing myself. "No, I did not mean to refer to the Emperor when I wrote those words. I should blush to have written anything so insulting. So I won't answer this call. Good-bye."

And so saying I ran off, without thanking my actors, and, what I felt far more, without kissing the actresses.

And the strangest part of it is, that my mother, my stepfather and all my friends were convinced, just as my audience had been, that I had meant the

defeated Napoleon by my *monster*. On what strange things do destinies depend. Had I had any taste for politics, I could have set up as a political writer from that day forth. Fortunately, the sentence which had attracted so much attention at the first performance passed unnoticed at the second, for the approach of the enemy and the imminence of a battle had begun in spite of all to frighten the Parisians a little, and, in consequence, the theatre was only half full. And as my horror for politics, in this matter, exceeded my interests as an author, I was pleased rather than vexed with the lukewarm attitude of the crowd.

Oh, these Parisians, what weathercocks they are ! I have always had the deepest pity for the people who have tried to keep them to one thing—an impossible task.

I have seen the Parisians, at the Ambigu Comique on March 23rd, 1814, applauding the prospect of the overthrow of the Empire.

A week later I saw them dirtying their white handkerchiefs on the boulevards, wiping up the dust under the feet of the horses of the Allied Sovereigns as they pranced at the head of their armies.

I saw them again, in the month of May following, when Louis XVIII had entered the Tuileries, dancing under the windows of this palace, and howling : “Long live our legitimate King.”

Then, because their legitimate king ventured to hold an opinion different to theirs ; because he had

a mind to restore to his friends, as a reward for their sufferings during the long exile which they had shared with him, the estates of which they had been robbed, and because he wished—a pious and noble sentiment—to build a tomb for the remains of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, I heard some Parisians lamenting that a Bourbon had been restored to them and regretting Father Violet, as the soldiers used to call the Emperor.

And when Father Violet returned to Paris in March 1815, I saw them crowding round him on the Place du Carrousel, deafening him with their cries of joy and of love, swearing to die for him to the last man.

Vows which last a hundred days. A hundred days later, the Parisians had once more ceased loving Napoleon, to bestow their affection afresh on Louis XVIII. On July 8th, 1815, they were once more dancing at the Tuileries under the windows of their legitimate king. This did not prevent them, some years later, in June 1821, from beginning the July revolution over again on a small scale, on the boulevards, to shouts of "Long live the Charter."

But enough, I could fill a volume with an account of all the changes of front which I have seen in the Parisians. And besides, I am preaching to people who are already converted, I imagine. My readers know, as well as I do, what to think of a people, of whom some writer, whose name I forget, said that it would be the first in the world, "if it could only make

up its mind once for all about what it likes and what it wants."

One morning in the year 1837, my servant came into my bedroom, which is also my study, and informed me "that an old friend wished to speak to me." An old friend! That was enough to make me go down and meet my visitor. And so I did, although I had a secret suspicion as to the claim. When a man has made a name, all sorts of friends spring up around him, friends whom he doesn't know and whom he doesn't want to know.

I found a poorly-dressed old man, standing in the centre of my drawing-room.

"Good day, my dear Paul de Kock," he said, holding out his hand.

And as I did not respond, for the simple reason that I did not recognize the man who wanted to shake hands with me, in the least, he continued :

"Oh I see, I understand, it's so long since we met last. You don't remember me, that's certain. You, you are always the same, but then you, you are still quite a young man, whilst I—I shall be seventy-two next month. Alas, yes, poor old Villeneuve is on the eve of his nice seventy-second birthday."

"Villeneuve! Oh, I beg your pardon, my friend. Pardon me for not having recognized you."

"No offence. I must have changed so much during the fifteen years that I have been absent from Paris. The fact is, that during these fifteen years,

I haven't eaten beefsteak with potatoes, every day. At the outside I have had potatoes without beef-steak every day."

"You have been unlucky."

"I have been it and am so still. You see, my feathers correspond with my song. I have all my wardrobe on my back, and it's not very elegant, is it? Ah, far off is the day when I used to be called the elegant Villeneuve. But, to begin with—perhaps you may remember it—my wife died in 1831, and that quite disorganized my life. Not that my wife was a woman of much order. No, economy and Madame Villeneuve never lived under the same roof. But all the same, she kept me on the curb, and prevented me from making a fool of myself—headstrong as I was. For instance, if she had lived, I should never have left the Ambigu-Comique. Oh, do you remember, it was I who played the leading part in your first piece at the Ambigu?"

"Oh, I remember it very well."

"*Madame de Valnoir*, a good little melodrama, upon my word, for a beginning. And at the end of the first performance the audience wanted to carry you in triumph because of a certain sentence, which it was thought contained an allusion—"

"Which never existed. And where do you come from, Villeneuve?"

"I have just come up from the country. I have dragged my gaiters almost everywhere during the last fifteen years—falling lower and lower as I grew

older. I used to play leading parts in Bordeaux, and now people will hardly employ me as letter-carrier at the theatres at Meaux or Coulommiers. And you, my dear Paul de Kock. It's different with you, you are happier than ever to-day."

"I have worked very hard."

"Yes, yes, you have made a name as a novelist, I know that. Oh, I have read several of your books in the country. Amongst others *La Maison Blanche*. It's excellent, and what a fine melodrama one could make of it. I say, you are not vexed with me for having called on you, as a very old acquaintance?"

"Certainly not. But what is your object in returning to Paris? Do you hope to—?"

"To get on the stage again? Oh, no, I'm too old. Oh, I don't deceive myself. I am too old. No manager could want me to-day. My ambition—and I have some friends with influence—is to get admitted into an establishment of a very different kind. You see, I am seventy-two years old, the right age—"

"And what is this establishment?"

"Why, Bicêtre, of course. There at least I shan't starve."

Poor Villeneuve! Come down to an asylum.

"Here, my friend," said I, slipping a louis into his hand, "here's something to help you to live till you get into Bicêtre."

He looked at the gold, as if he wished to kiss it.

"Thank you," he said. "You are good. I expected it of you. Ah, the sight of this yellow-boy

makes me feel quite young again, upon my word. Will you let me call on you again, to present my respects, before I go into the asylum."

"With the greatest pleasure."

"Thank you once more, *au revoir.*"

The old actor went off. Eleven o'clock was striking, so I lunched and went out. It was my custom, at that time, to go and read the papers at the Café de l'Ambigu, every day after lunch. The Café de l'Ambigu was a restaurant which in those days was kept by a man called Quiney, whose talents as a cook were as much admired by connoisseurs, as his conjugal felicity was envied. The fact is that if the dishes prepared by Quiney were excellent, his wife, whose business it was to write out the bills at the desk, was pretty, too pretty. No rose without a thorn. It was rumoured that Quiney was as jealous as a tiger about his charming wife. Othello, a restaurant-keeper! Othello forced to watch a sauce with one eye and a gallant with the other. Othello-Quiney must have suffered.

As I had lunched, I went into the café part of the establishment. There were never many people there in the morning, and I could read what I wanted to read in peace and quiet. I had already crossed the threshold of this room, and had already picked up a newspaper, when a joyous voice called out to me :

"Hullo, Hullo ! Paul de Kock. You are doing the same as I, dear friend, you have come to take a cup of coffee after your lunch."

I turned round sharply and, I admit, was petrified. It was none other than Villeneuve. Villeneuve, the old actor, to whom I had just given alms, I find him, a few minutes after I had given him money to provide himself with the necessaries of life, indulging himself in luxuries, and, thus found out, he makes a joke of it, and doesn't mind calling out to me.

I thought it so strong that I couldn't say a word. Villeneuve, however, did not seem to mind my silence, and having sipped his drop of coffee, he paid the waiter and went out saying as he passed me with a familiar nod.

"*Au revoir*, my dear Paul de Kock."

Quiney entered the room just as Villeneuve left it.

"Has that old gentleman been lunching here?" I asked.

"Yes."

"What sort of a lunch did he have—may I ask?"

"Oh, a fairly good lunch and, between ourselves, his order rather surprised me, for the old man doesn't look up to much. Oysters, a fillet with olives, a fried sole, some Roquefort and a bottle of Moulin-à-vent. It ran up to eight francs. But why do you ask me, Monsieur de Kock? Do you know the old gentleman?"

"Yes, I know him a little. He's an old actor. But my question was of no importance. Thank you, Monsieur Quiney."

It was too much. He had spent eight francs on his lunch, and, with the influence of all his friends,

all his future prospects reduced themselves to a cell in Bicêtre. "Go and give alms to such humbugs," I muttered.

But after-thoughts pacified me. Great and small, rich and poor, all artists—it is notorious—don't look on life, and never will look on it, like the ruck of martyrs of middle-class existence. On the eve of breaking the black bread of charity, Villeneuve had wished to eat the white bread of luxury for the last time. And why not? What right had I to reproach him this last pleasure, because I had given him a miserable twenty-franc piece? I was sorry to have given him a cold look. I will wager that if I had given him a smile, he would have been delighted to have treated me—as a return favour—to a drop of coffee with my money.

## CHAPTER VI

A pause. — My first success. — *Georgette ou la Nièce du tabellion.* — Madame de Saint-Phar. — The Marais soirées. — A garret. — How romantic situations arise. — Hubert, the bookseller in the wooden galleries of the Palais-Royal. — The first money received. — *Frère Jacques.* — *Mon voisin Raymond.* — At Ladvocat's house. — Chateaubriand. — *Gustare ou le mauvais sujet.* Peacock shrieks from the Prudes. — A duel with a chemist. — A love adventure. — Goose, Turkey, or Chicken. — How the adventure was fated to end. — A gallant who bolts at full speed. — Nicolas Barba. — A visit to Pigault-Lebrun. — Ladvocat again. — Charles Nodier and Zozo. — The bookseller with the truffles. — Hippolyte Souverain, the miller. — M. Alexandre Dumas fils. — Baudry. — Lachapelle. — Alexandre Cadot. — How we dined at his house. — Sartorius. — A publisher of whom I won't speak. —

In the preceding five chapters, which, in accordance with the plan I made in beginning to write, begin in 1793 and finish in 1815, and represent, in some sort, the first part of my Memoirs, I have initiated you, if not day by day, at least almost year by year, into all the things, which happened from my childhood and the earliest days of my youth, and which I thought might interest you. Henceforth, I shall make more rapid strides over the field of my sou-

venirs, firstly because it is not the history of my life that I am writing here (my life—I am thankful to say—has been too calm and too matter-of-fact to be of much interest to the public), and secondly because I find that, in stories of this kind, a methodical chronological order of events is as tiresome as it is monotonous and I don't want to be hampered by its observance.

Thus, for example, I have told you how I published my first book and how I got my first play acted ; well, I shall certainly take good care not to tell you the stories, one after the other, of each of the works, from my pen, which followed, both in the publishers' shops and on the stage, on *My Wife's Child* and *Madame de Valnoir*. Up to date, I have written nearly four hundred volumes, and I have had more than two hundred theatrical pieces acted on the stage, melodramas, dramas, comic operas, pantomimes, comedies and vaudevilles, and you will therefore admit, that were I to try and speak of them all in detail, I should show myself a very vain man and tax your patience in a terrible manner.

Accordingly, when I happen to remember an anecdote, referring to such or such a novel, or to such or such a play, or to this person or that, of more or less importance, whom I happened to know, I will set it down. But—it's agreed, is it not?—in this second part, I am not going to keep to a chronological order in writing my Memoirs. They will come, as fancy wills it, the most recent and the earliest. Let

those who love me follow me.

Nevertheless, I should hold myself altogether wanting in gratitude, if, casting aside this resolution for once only, I did not at once say who it was to whom I was indebted for the publication of my second novel, *Georgette ou La Nièce du tabellion*, that is to say my first success as a novelist, the book which brought me out of obscurity. Between ourselves, *My Wife's Child* had done nothing at all in that direction.

And as soon as I have finished writing about a publisher, whose name is synonymous in my head and in my heart with all that is gracious, kindly and honest, I shall, killing two birds with one stone, sketch a few more of my publishers. This is a debt which I owe to these gentlemen. I cannot say that in every instance it is a debt of gratitude.

You will remember that I started *Georgette* when I thought that the ball was at my feet, and that, too soon finding out how baseless were my hopes, seeing that nobody bought my first novel, I had abandoned all intentions of writing a second one. But true it is that 'he who has drunk will drink,' and still truer is it that 'he who has written will write.' The success of *Madame de Valnoir* at the Ambigu had, no doubt, been very pleasant, but, whilst retaining the wish to continue to write for the stage, I felt instinctively that it was not in that branch of literature that I should win fame.

So I went back to work on *Georgette*.

If *Georgette ou La Nièce du tabellion* was not yet one of my good novels (I speak, of course, to those who allow that I have written good novels), it is evident, nevertheless, that it shows progress over its predecessor. The reason is that in *Georgette* observation has a much larger place than imagination. I had begun to see, as I wrote, that, especially in humorous books, a novelist does much better to copy life than to invent it. Thus, one of the chapters in *Georgette*, the chapter called, *Une Soirée au Marais*, is an exact description of a weekly social gathering which I often used to attend. It was held, as a matter of fact, in the Marais, in the Rue du Pont-aux-Choux, at the house of a certain Madame de Saint-Phar.

What happy hours were those that I spent in this house. For although most of the habitual guests were people by no means amusing, there were also some very pleasant people, especially amongst the ladies. There was dancing, there was music, there were parlour games, at Madame de Saint-Phar's house ; and I had fallen in love with a certain young lady—she was of age—called Caroline M—, a tall fair girl who only wanted to be loved. Now it happened that one evening, when we were playing hide and seek, Caroline and I had left Madame de St.-Phar's apartment and somehow or other had come together at the top of the staircase in a little garret, of which, by a fortunate chance, the door was standing open. For we were very anxious to hide ourselves in an effective

manner, my lady-love and I. And we might be there still—in that hospitable little room—for I'm hanged if anybody would have thought of looking for us there—if we hadn't been routed out by the tenant of the room, a girl who made gloves. This grisette had gone downstairs to buy something for her supper, and as she had no reason to be afraid of thieves, she had left her door open. You can imagine her surprise, on her return, at finding a young man and a young woman, sharing the same chair, and vowing eternal love to one another. A *bourgeoise* would have screamed, the glovemaker girl simply laughed, and, if I remember rightly, was good enough to light us downstairs to Madame de Saint-Phar's apartment. For we neither of us knew where we were. One loses count in the seventh heaven.

*Georgette ou La Nièce du tabellion* is better, then, than *My Wife's Child*, but, like *My Wife's Child*, *Georgette* had to put up with the disdain of the publishers, and like *My Wife's Child* also, to do time in the cupboard. She remained there, indeed, even longer than the *Child*. For four years. In four years I readily forgot my first novel. But I did not remain idle during these forty-eight months. I wrote melodramas and vaudevilles. One fine day, as I was selling the manuscript of a play to Barba—for I had entered into business relations with the celebrated Nicolas Barba of the Palais-Royal—I suddenly remembered *Georgette* and had the courage to offer it to him.

"I don't mean to publish any more novels," he said, "but you can bring me yours and if it's worth printing, I'll introduce you to a colleague who will publish it for you."

This colleague was Hubert, who was in business in the wooden galleries of the Palais-Royal, a few doors off Nicolas Barba's shop.

I can still see Hubert's affable face, when I called on him.

"Oh, so you're M. Paul de Kock. Be so good as to take a seat. I have read your novel and I like it very much. I'll put it in hand at once, as soon as we have come to terms. The terms must be low, as you see I can't pay a big price in a first transaction. But if, as I expect, *Georgette* goes off well, I'll make you a better offer for your next book. Oh, we shall agree all right, you will see."

And I too, I was sure that we should agree. We were already agreed, since he had read my novel and 'liked it very much.' Oh, he had said so himself. And not only was he going to 'put it in hand' at once, but he was going to pay me for it. And he was asking me to write him another. But this man was no publisher, he was a guardian angel, the guardian angel of young authors. If he hid his wings it was so as not to frighten them.

Ah, when I left his shop, with half the price of the sale of *Georgette* in my pocket—for we signed the agreement at once and he paid me half the price agreed upon on the spot (a price which I can tell you,

I did not bargain about)—the galleries of the Palais Royal were not lofty enough for me, I struck the roofs with my forehead. I had a publisher who paid me. Later on in life, I sold my novels at a good price. *L'Amant de la Lune* especially, a novel in ten volumes, was bought, cash down, by Baudry for twenty thousand francs. Well, these twenty large notes which I spread out on my table did not give me as much pleasure as the few louis which I received that day from Hubert. I wanted both to keep them for ever—as the precious firstfruits of a labour which I loved—and to spend them all at once, in a feast of thanksgiving. I did not spend them all at once and I did not keep them, but both love and friendship shared in my good fortune. Miss Caroline, my lady-love of hide and seek, received a turquoise ring, and Maricot, Pâris, and two other of my friends, the brothers C——z, had an excellent dinner with me at my expense at Beauvilliers'. We drank the health of *Georgette* and of Hubert. "Is that a newly married couple?" asked an old Paul Pry who was sitting at the next table. "Not yet, sir," answered Maricot very seriously, "Hubert and *Georgette* are only engaged at present, but their marriage will soon take place, and we hope that they will be very happy and that they will have many children." "So be it," said old Paul Pry. "So be it," said we in chorus.

After *Georgette*, Hubert published *Gustave ou le Mauvais Sujet*, and then *Frère Jacques* and then *Mon Voisin Raymond*, which everybody thinks may

best novel. Chateaubriand, who although he was a poet, did not consider it below his dignity to laugh (in which respect he differed from Lamartine) did me the honour one day to compliment me in person on this novel. It was three or four months before the July Revolution. I was at Ladvocat's, the publisher's, when M. de Chateaubriand came in. I was just leaving, when Lavocat motioning to me to stay, said to the author of *Atala*:

"Monsieur de Chateaubriand, will you allow me to introduce to you the author of a book, which, as you have often told me, you consider as one of the most amusing, the merriest, and the most truly Gallic books you have ever read, the author of *Mon Voisin Raymond*?"

"Monsieur Paul de Kock," cried Chateaubriand, stepping up to me with a charming smile. "Why I'm delighted to make your acquaintance, sir. Yes, indeed, *Mon Voisin Raymond* is a delightful novel, one of the truest and wittiest pictures of Parisian life that has ever been written. But that's not the only book of yours that I have read, sir, I think that I have read most of your works and, though I did not like them all as well as *Mon Voisin Raymond*, I am glad to be able to say, at least, that I noticed humour in them all—rather violent humour perhaps, in places, but never gross. Go on as you have done, and I can prophesy that you will have your place amongst French novelists."

People may accuse me perhaps, after reading the

above, of smacking my lips too complacently over the honey of an illustrious writer. But, if I have never retorted on the bitter criticisms of which I have often been the object, and if I do not bear the slightest ill-feeling at the remembrance of these criticisms, may I not be excused, to-day, for relating an incident of my literary life of which I have the right to be proud, and which, till now, I have only told to my intimate friends. Besides, at least I think so, one only writes one's Memoirs for those of the public, who take an interest in the man because they like the author. So my readers must not blame me for telling this anecdote about Chateaubriand. On the contrary, it shows them that they are not so very ill-advised in liking novels which Chateaubriand found meritorious.

*Georgette ou La Nièce du tabellion* sold well, but it was *Gustave ou le Mauvais Sujet* especially, which got me talked about. Not in terms of praise by everybody. Oh, no. Many persons found the book rather too coarse, but I for my part declare, and I do so without a blush, that neither at that time nor later, did I feel the slightest remorse for my crime. To speak frankly, come, can you expect a novel called *Gustave ou le Mauvais Sujet* to have anything in common with *Télémaque*—unless it be where the son of Ulysses goes to chat, on the sly, in the caves, with the beautiful nymph Eucharis? Eh, eh, it can't be denied, in that respect Telemachus has a very

close resemblance to my *Gustave*. Well, the publication of this book raised a storm of alarmed prudishness against me, not only in the newspapers, but also amongst certain of my acquaintances. What was I doing? Good Heavens! Why Pigault's *La Folie Espagnole* was but a book by Ducray-Duminil as compared to *Gustave*. L'Aretin had come to life again, and the name of him was Paul de Kock. At my mother's house, where I sometimes sacrificed myself to the delights of a game of boston at farthing points, a lady, who six weeks later was caught by her husband *in flagrante delicto* with one of her cousins, refused to sit opposite me. I filled her with terror, she said. Elsewhere, a mature and very ugly lady, whom I had asked, out of sheer politeness to dance with me, fainted when I took her hand. She said, next day, that it had seemed to her that my fingers were burning coals. Like Satan's fingers, neither more nor less. I laughed at all this nonsense, but one day, when a gentleman remarked, in my presence, in an artist's studio, that "if he were the Government, he would have *Gustave* burnt on the place of execution, as an obscene book, and would throw the author, for the rest of his days, into the deepest dungeon," my blood boiled so forcibly that that gentleman had reason to regret his words. I gave him the best box on the ears that he had ever received in his life.

We exchanged cards. My adversary—whom we will call Durand, for he is living still and, if I am not

mistaken, carries on his business somewhere—my adversary was a chemist. Where does prudishness not take shelter? The next day, at eight o'clock in the morning, we met in the Bois de Boulogne. Pâris and Maricot were my seconds. M. Durand's seconds must have been colleagues of his, at least they looked like people who were more accustomed to handle other instruments than pistols. For pistols had been decided upon for the duel.

I had been walking up and down for a quarter of an hour, waiting for the weapons to be loaded, and although I was not at all anxious about the result of the duel, I was beginning to find the preliminaries much too long, when I suddenly saw Pâris and Maricot coming up to me, splitting their sides with laughter.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"The matter, indeed," cried Maricot. "Your duel is over and done."

"Over and done," said Pâris.

"*Et le combat finit, faute de combattants.*"

"What. M. Durand...?"

"M. Durand has taken to his heels."

"But his seconds."

"Prudent men, they showed him the way."

"You're joking?"

"Not in the least. To begin with, when I took the pistols out of their case, one of M. Durand's seconds—a little yellow chap—suddenly turned such a

hue of green that neither Pâris nor myself were in the least surprised when he begged to be allowed to step aside for a moment. The other second showed less emotion and remained whilst I loaded the first pistol. But when I was beginning on the second he suddenly said: ‘Perhaps Achilles is ill.’ (It appears that the name of the gentleman who turned such a rich green, is Achilles.) ‘I must go and see if he doesn’t want me.’ And without waiting for any answer, he ran off in the same direction as the first. Up comes M. Durand, who from afar has seen his seconds disappear one after the other. ‘Where have my friends gone to?’ says he. ‘My word, sir,’ says Pâris, ‘we don’t know, but we fancy that your friends are not much accustomed to duelling and that if you want this encounter to come off, you had better screw up their courage a bit with a word of serious advice.’

“‘Oh,’ muttered M. Durand, who, whilst Pâris was speaking, had been looking at the pistols with a haggard eye. ‘Oh, the sight of these deadly weapons has upset my friends. Very well, gentlemen, be good enough to wait a minute or two. I’ll go and fetch them and I’ll bring them back. Oh, don’t be afraid, I’ll bring them back in a minute or two.’”

Maricot paused in his story and burst out into a peal of laughter in which Pâris joined.

“And what then,” said I, laughing also—so contagious was their mirth. “I suppose M. Durand means to keep his word and bring back his seconds.”

“You bet he doesn’t,” said Maricot. “Principal and

seconds are far off by now, unless all three of them have rolled into a ditch. You can imagine that after what M. Durand said, neither of us stayed where we were. We wanted to see what he was going to do. So we followed him, some way behind!"

"And you saw . . . ?"

"We saw your adversary galloping after his friends, three or four hundred paces from this thicket, along an avenue which leads to Paris. When he caught up with them he took them by the arms and all three bolted off together, without once looking round, in the direction of the capital."

"It's not possible!"

"It's so possible that I'm off now to put the pistols which we left lying on the grass over there, back into their case. And then—you can trust my experience in these matters Paul—we will set about getting some breakfast, and that without loss of time. After that, if you want to give your formidable enemy the usual quarter of an hour's grace, you may do so. But trust me, it'll only be a waste of time. You know what our forefathers used to nickname chemists—"The kneeling musketeers." M. Durand won't fight. He can't fight. Come, if chemists were to fight, who would work the syringe?"

This is the only duel that I ever fought, and I don't regret it, for I think duelling absurd, and I should have been very sorry indeed to have killed a chemist. If this chemist had killed me—to speak like Calino—I should have regretted it all my life.

However, I did not always get abuse and quarrels out of *Gustave, the Bad Boy*. All readers are not alike, thank goodness. Some like what others don't. And it is probable that "the others" were in the minority in this case, seeing that the first edition of my novel was sold out in four months.

At any rate many ladies were very gracious to me after reading *Gustave*. Ladies, evidently, who liked bad boys. There used to be ladies of that kind in those days.

And as to that here is a little story.

One morning, one of Hubert's clerks handed me a note which had been left for me the day before at the shop, by a servant-girl. It ran as follows :

"My Author,

"As I don't know your address, I write to you at your publisher's. I have read your *Gustave* book, and that made me think I'd like to know you personally. Will you come and sup with me the day after to-morrow at my house? There'll only be the two of us, as you may suppose. I know it's not the right thing for women to invite men, but I am a woman of the good sort; so, if you feel like it, walk up and down, in front of the Porte Saint-Martin the day after to-morrow, Thursday, at 7 o'clock in the evening, when you'll see, coming from the Rue Saint-Martin, a servant woman, about fifty years old, wearing a Norman cap, and holding a feather-brush in one hand and a broom in the other. That'll be my servant. You'll go up to her and say 'I am the

gentleman.' She will take you to the right place. Ask yourself. If it will help you to make up your mind, I may tell you that I am a widow of twenty-eight and every man who meets me, stares at me. There you are.

"My Christian name is  
"Joséphine."

A good middle-class woman. I could see from the style of the letter and the number of faults of spelling which adorned it, that it had not been written by a duchess. But "a widow of twenty-eight" and "all the men stare at me!..." I was young, fond of adventures of all kinds and so I did not take much time in "asking" myself.

On the next day but one, at the appointed hour, I was at the rendez-vous.

The Normandy serving-woman soon arrived, carrying the emblems which had been agreed upon, a feather-brush and a broom. I walked up to her and whispered in her ear, "I am the gentleman." She looked at me and her eyes seemed to express astonishment. She had, no doubt, expected to see a very different sort of gentleman. However, she nodded and said :

"All right! All right! If you're the gentleman, I'll walk ahead and you'll follow me."

"I should think you will walk ahead," said I to myself. Although it was dark, I was not at all tempted by the prospect of chatting on the way

with this old hag of a peasant woman.

We did not go far, only to where the Square des Arts et Metiers now stands in the Rue Saint-Martin. The house was entered by an alley, with a *rôtisserie* on one side and a grocery on the other.

"Here we are," said the servant. "Follow me a bit longer."

"Is it high up?" I asked, as I laid my hand on the balustrade of a dark, dirty and winding staircase.

"No, it's on the first landing. Are you frightened of going up stairs."

"I am not frightened, but I can't breathe."

"I can quite understand that."

Now I should like to know, why "she could quite understand that." There was no doubt about it, the old woman could not stand me at any price.

She brought me through an antichamber, into a parlour, which, without being elegant, spoke of decent competency on the part of its owner. It was furnished with a suite of mahogany, upholstered in velvet, a clock with a copper group upon it, standing between two china vases, filled with artificial flowers, and there were some family portraits on the walls.

"I'll go and tell the missus that you've come," said the servant.

I looked at the family portraits. Vulgar and ugly faces, and what bad painting! These pictures must have cost about twelve shillings each, including the frames. I hold that one can judge of people's stand-

ing, by the pictures which they hang up in their homes. Madame Joséphine must be of all middle-class women the most middle-class.

But now the door through which the servant had gone out opened again. I was just looking at the portrait of a huge fellow, with a Newgate collar beard and a gold chain, as thick as one's little finger, which folded twice a-round his waistcoat—the husband of my widow, no doubt. At the sound of the door, I turned round, and found myself face to face with Madame Joséphine. She was a big motherly woman, not ugly and very fresh looking, but so fat, so very fat. Oh, there could be no doubt that the gentleman with the gold chain was her defunct husband.

Did my face show the vague fear that I had felt at the sight of such corpulence? Be that as it may, it is certain that Madame Joséphine made a slight grimace when she saw me.

There was a silent pause which was very awkward for both of us. At last she said :

“You are M. Paul de Kock.”

“Yes, Madame.”

“It’s funny !”

“What’s funny ?”

“Well, from your book, I had thought you—well, I had thought you quite different.”

“Oh indeed. And what sort of man did you think I was? Tell me all about it, Madame.”

“Well, I believed you—I thought you—”

"You thought I should turn out a big young fellow of six feet, with broad shoulders, a quantity of hair, and a blue-black beard."

"Oh, I didn't absolutely want a blue-black beard, but you, you, you can't be very strong, eh?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Madame. I am hardly ever ill."

"Strange, you look so thin. But you must admit, at least, that your sight is bad."

Madame Joséphine alluded to my spectacles. I had worn spectacles from the time I was a youth until the age of thirty-five. It was only in 1828, that, my sight having greatly improved, I was able to dispense with an artificial aid which, I admit, does not improve one's personal appearance.

I bit my lips. My widow irritated me with her questions. It was no amorous woman that I had before me, but a medical inspector.

"Goodness gracious, Madame," said I, sharply enough, "it's true that I am very short-sighted, but my spectacles don't prevent me from eating, nor from courting the ladies, and, if I usually keep them on at table, I also take them off elsewhere."

Madame Joséphine burst out laughing.

"You are quite right," she said, "and it's stupid of me to be surprised because you don't look like a Hercules. There are men who look like Hercules, and who, none the less, are not particularly vigorous. My husband, for instance. To look at him, one would have thought him capable of

knocking down a wall with one blow of his fist, whilst as a matter of fact he couldn't even knock down a lath and plaster concern. I could roll him up in one hand. Besides, I suppose, one can't expect an author to be built like a market-porter. Let's go to supper, *mon petit*. Are you hungry?"

"Hum ! Hum !..."

"Oh, your appetite will come whilst you're eating. Come along to supper."

So saying, Madame Joséphine dragged me—there's no other word for it—into the dining-room, where supper was laid. There was a roast goose, big enough to give indigestion to a whole regiment. Near the table was a basket filled with bottles.

"Do you like goose?" asked my widow.

"Hum ! Hum !..."

"'Hum ! Hum !' again. Perhaps you would have preferred a turkey?"

"Oh..."

"Don't mind saying so. If you prefer turkey, I'll tell Gervaise to go down-stairs and pick us one out, or perhaps a chicken. Yes, eh? you would prefer a chicken. I say, Gervaise."

So, because I had no wish either for a goose or for a turkey, a chicken was to be picked out for me. These words were a revelation. The roasting-shop which I had noticed down-stairs belonged to Madame Joséphine. I had made the conquest of a *rôtisseuse*. And the conquest was an imaginary one into the bargain—for as a matter of fact—Oh, my spectacles

had chilled the fat shopwoman indeed.

Gervaise came running in. She smiled ironically on hearing that she was to substitute a less substantial bird for what had been served. "No breath, no appetite,"—so I interpreted her smile—"What a wretched acquaintance Madame has made, to be sure."

The fact is that the more I looked at Madame Joséphine, the less—though it was eating my own words—did I feel anxious to show her that a man may wear spectacles and yet be a very ardent lover. This *rôtisseuse* was not a woman, she was a phenomenon. She was the Hottentot Venus of the Rue Saint-Martin. It would take one at least an hour merely to cover her hand with kisses.

How was I to escape?

She had placed me at her side at table.

"We can drink a drop, whilst waiting for the chicken," said she, filling my glass up to the brim.

"Oh thanks," I murmured, "but we've plenty of time."

"Won't you drink glasses with me?"

"Oh. I beg your pardon. But its not my habit, before eating to—to—"

"Oh, indeed. Now I, I can drink off a bottle while the bread is soaking in the soup, and without turning a hair either. Drink it up. It's a good tap, my wine, it's Mâcon. And so your business is making books? Does it bring in anything, a business of that kind? No, eh? There's more money to be made in

trade. But where do you find all the nonsense that you shove into your books?"

"I do not find it. People give it to me."

"What sort of people?"

"Oh, all sorts of people. People whom I meet everywhere. Oh, there's no lack of persons to supply me with plots and characters for my novels."

"Dear, dear, just fancy! I had imagined that you simply copied your novels out of old books which you bought at the second-hand bookstalls on the quays. By changing them a bit, by freshening them up—"

So she was stupid into the bargain. Not only was she enormous, this *rôtisseuse*, but stupid. My mind was soon made up.

Gervaise came back.

"Madame, there's no more chicken, so I have brought up half a turkey instead."

"Very well. Very well. So much the worse, eh, *mon petit*. You'll eat turkey for once in a way, won't you?"

"Certainly, Madame, but first—"

So saying, I rose from the table.

"What's the matter?" said Madame Joséphine.  
"Do you want anything?"

"Yes, if you don't mind. I should like to be alone for—five minutes—in your drawing-room."

"In my drawing-room! What do you want to go into my drawing-room for?"

"Because it's just the place for me to write a few

lines in my pocket-book."

"Oh, it's to write. I had thought that—"

"Please excuse me. You see, in my line of business, when a thought strikes me, it is imperative that I should note it down at once."

"Very well. Go, go. I'll carve this half turkey whilst you are jotting down your thoughts."

To enter the drawing-room—where I had left my hat—to clear it at a bound and the antichamber at another, to get down the staircase taking four steps at a stride, to bolt up the alley and, once in the street, to rush off at the top speed of my legs, all that was, for me, a matter of a few seconds.

My *rôtisseuse* could hardly have got the wing off the half turkey, before I had reached the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre, vowing by all the saints, never in the future to let myself be so easily lured by the *billets doux* of excellent shopwomen.

A woman of a good sort is all right, but she must not be of too good a sort.

And Madame Joséphine was really much too good a sort.

Having, in these retrospective remarks about my various publishers, spoken about Hubert, I must say a few words about Nicolas Barba, in spite of the fact that, in consequence of certain disreputable occurrences—about which I don't care to speak—which took place some years before his death, and in which

—to my thinking—he was badly mixed up, my relations with him came suddenly to an end.

For the rest, Nicolas Barba was a good fellow ; *fat Barba*, as people used to call him, and rightly so, seeing that in stature and bulk he was a giant. He was rather a chatterbox, rather a boaster, but often witty both as a boaster and a chatterbox. Pigault-Lebrun was the hero he worshipped, and, indeed it is so rare to hear a tradesman express any gratitude to those who have made his fortune, that we could listen without weariness to Barba, as he kept on talking about “his dear author and friend.” And he did more than merely talk about his friendship for Pigault, he gave him a practical proof of it, by paying him, all his life, beginning from the day on which he published his fortieth volume, an annual allowance of twelve hundred francs. Forty-eight pounds. The smallness of the sum makes you smile, but let me tell you that forty years ago that seemed a very respectable sum.

I frequently met Pigault-Lebrun, when I was a young man, at Nicolas Barba’s house in the Cour des Fontaines, but he always treated me so coldly that in spite of myself—for I held his talent in the very highest esteem—I was forced to limit my relations with him to those of simple politeness. However, one day in the autumn of 1832, as I was walking with my mother at La Celle-Saint-Cloud, where he was then living, I accepted an offer made me by Nicolas Barba, to make a call on Pigault-Lebrun.

He was then quite an old man—he must have been about eighty—but he was vigorous still. On this occasion, he received me very cordially.

"You are carrying on my work," said he to me. "I don't read your novels. It's long since I read anything, but I'm told that they are very full of fun. That's right, make people laugh, it's much more difficult than to make people cry."

Nicolas Barba was for many years a constant visitor to my modest home. When, after 1830, I had bought the first little house I had, in the Romainville woods, hardly a week passed without his coming and spending a whole day with me. He used to come on foot, from the Palais-Royal, leaning on his crook-handled stick, with which he used to amuse my children, taking them to the neighbouring fields, and rifling the trees—at the risk of getting into trouble with the country constable—of apples and nuts. He used to tell my wife and me his life, and his adventures as a soldier. He had been a *chasseur* in the Boulonnais regiment, a circumstance of which he was not a little proud. He used to tell us of his adventures with Prince Jérôme, escapades which supplied the material for the famous novel called *Mon Oncle Thomas*.

A cloud came over the sky—a cloud which too soon broke into a tempest over my head—and farewell to Nicolas Barba, a last farewell. I was sorry for it, for I loved him. Perhaps, later on, he also thought, with regret, of my little house, of my child-

ren, of our chats. Well, well! I had already learned by experience that vows of friendship are no more graven in brass than are vows of love, and, for years, as I passed before Nicolas Barba's shop, I had but to turn aside my head. I may call that a chronic twist of the neck. It is not a mortal affection.

I had but few business relations with Ladvocat, the famous publisher of a quantity of Memoirs, from which he extracted heaps of gold—which he was stupid enough to scatter to the winds. All I did for him was to write an article for his book *Les Cent-et-un*, but I take pleasure in thinking of him as a pleasant gentleman, who neither in voice nor in manners had anything of the tradesman about him. And is not this praise, in itself, a criticism? Would it not have been better for Ladvocat if he had been less a gentleman and a better business-man, and thus to have escaped becoming *dress-maker*, as a last resource? For, as we all know, this is how Ladvocat crowned his career. He passed from the publishing business into a dress-making shop. There is no evidence that he in person look the measures for the dresses which were cut out in his workshops, but it is quite certain, that he used to preside over their making-up, and, more than that, that he used to boast of it.

I have mentioned that it was at his house that I had one day the honour of meeting with Chateaubriand. Another day, whilst I was talking in his

shop with Merle,—the author of *Le Ci-devant Jeune Homme* and of *Le Bourgmestre de Saardam*, besides being the editor of the theatrical sheet *La Quotidienne*, and who, like Martainville, was both a rabid Royalist and a writer of talent,—I saw a man come in, a rather tall man, with very bright eyes, a somewhat big nose, and a satirical mouth. Ladvocat leaving Merle and me, rushed up to him with both hands stretched out and cried :

“My dear old Nodier! How do you do?”

“Do you know Charles Nodier?” asked Merle.

“Not at all.”

“Well he knows you and has known you a long while.”

“Bah. Who told you that?”

“He himself.”

“And how does he know me? Where has he seen me?”

“Somewhere where you often went formerly, it appears. Wait a bit, he’ll tell you about it himself.”

Merle went up to Nodier and drawing his attention to me with a look, whispered some words in his ear. Thereupon the author of *La Fée aux Miettes* came up to me and said :

“Merle has told you the truth, Monsieur Paul de Kock, I have had the pleasure of knowing you for the last twenty years.”

“Indeed, sir? And would you be so kind as to tell me——”

“Where we used to meet—not once, but a hun-

dred, two hundred times. Very willingly. This is 1833, is it not. Very well, in the days when the Boulevard du Temple was still the Boulevard du Temple, that is to say, the most typical place in Paris, with its booths of mountebanks, who never left the spot, its wax-works shows, its freaks and its menageries, don't you remember a certain clown, half Jocrisse, half Harlequin, whose tricks were the funniest things one could imagine?"

"Zozo?"

"Zozo. That's it, Zozo. Well, isn't it true, that from 1810 to 1820, whilst you were still quite a young man, you used to be one of Zozo's most faithful admirers?"

"Quite true. I lived in the quarter, and I don't think that two days ever passed without my going to see the funny fellow."

"Well, I too, though I didn't live in the Marais, I was so fond of Zozo—what am I saying, I worshipped him—that I never let two days pass without going to split my sides with laughing at his fooleries. Well, as one of his audience, I got to know the faces of all the other spectators, who, by laughing as heartily as myself, seemed to me the most intelligent people there. So don't be surprised that when a month or two ago, Merle pointed you out to me, at the theatre, I should have exclaimed : 'That Paul de Kock ! Why I have known him for centuries ! And though I have never exchanged one word with him, I'll wager he's a very good fellow. He knows how

to laugh.'"

Charlieu, the publisher of the illustrated quarto edition of my novels, had many points of resemblance, both in manners and way of speaking, with Ladvocat. M. de Charlieu was typical of the aristocratic tradesman. He had horses and carriages, a townhouse and a house in the country. He had a large private fortune of his own and was very successful in business and so could indulge in luxuries without being charged with extravagance. He owned large estates in the south and never failed to send me, three or four times every winter, some splendid pots of game, or succulent foies gras, stuffed with black truffles which were found on his estate. And I won't deny that I was very pleased to be in business relations with a publisher who had truffles on his estate and who sent me some in pâtés de foies gras.

I am greedy and I admit it. Is it a vice? Yes, no doubt, in the eyes of those who are not. And I will say further that I don't know anything more irritating at table than to see a lot of people, who like nothing and will eat nothing. What does that mean, after all? Nothing, but that their stomachs are out of order. And to be careful, because one's stomach is out of order, shows prudence, but not a virtuous disposition.

It's the same with those persons, who, when you ask them to cut in for a game of *bouillotte* or whist,

say, in a pinched manner, "No, thank you. I never play cards. I have never touched a card in my life. Oh, I have a horror of gambling!" Beware of such puritans; prick them to the quick, and you'll find what niggards they are. Their pretended horror is far less than is their fear of losing a five-franc piece. How often have I repeated, what Voltaire said to a lady, to young men who thought themselves very clever in posing before me as enemies and despisers of cardplaying: "You don't play cards? Well, I'm sorry for you. You are preparing a very sad old age for yourself."

Gambling, no doubt, as my stepfather understood it, has its dangers, but—but here I am gossiping, moralizing in my fashion, all in connection with the sketch of one of my publishers. Let us hasten on to another, to Hippolyte Souverain, a big publisher also, in his day, who published many works of our most celebrated authors, Balzac, Dumas, Soulié. Souverain was a man of intelligence, but keen! very keen, arch-keen! Here is an example of his keenness. The first novel with which I did business with him, was *Ce Monsieur*. It was to be in two volumes. At least I had written matter for two volumes, and our agreement was on that basis. So I was not a little surprised, on correcting the proofs of *Ce Monsieur*, to find that Souverain was making arrangements to make a three volume book of it.

I went to his office.

"Yes," said he. "*Ce Monsieur* will be in three

volumes. But what does that matter to you?"

"It matters—The matter is that I sold you only two volumes, and that I am surprised—"

"Surprised at what. Let's argue it out, if you please. Did I, or did I not, pay you the price you asked me for your two volumes?"

"You did."

"Very well then, because, like a clever miller, I can make three millings of the corn I have bought with my hard cash instead of two, where's the harm? What is mine is mine, and I am entitled to make the most profitable use I can of it. I defy you to prove the contrary."

I made no answer, for all that good old Souverain's arguments appeared to me of a very specious nature; but, when we next did business together, I took care to act, as I thought, in a way which would secure to me my due share of all the "millings" which he would get from my corn!

This time, it was *L'Amoureux transi* that I sold to him. "In *three* volumes," said I, as I handed him the manuscript.

"All right," answered he without turning a hair. "So I'll pay you for three volumes."

And pay me he did. But out of my *three* volumes, he made *four*. As a publisher, Souverain, was decidedly too skilful a miller for me. I declared myself beaten.

A clever story-teller, for he has travelled much, a charming talker—except when he is talking about

certain religious and social matters which are not at all in my line—Souverain, although he no longer publishes for me, has continued to be a welcome guest at my house. Two or three years ago, he mentioned to me that Alexandre Dumas *fils* was anxious to make my acquaintance.

"I should like nothing better," I said, "than to make Dumas' acquaintance."

"Then will you come and lunch with me one of these days?"

"With pleasure."

A week later, I received a note asking me to come on the next day but one, at twelve o'clock, to the Notta restaurant at the corner of the boulevard and the Faubourg Poissonnière. I kept the appointment, and found Souverain waiting for me and very soon afterwards M. Alexandre Dumas *fils* joined us. I pass over the compliments which he was good enough to address to me—courtesy as well as intelligence are innate in the Dumas family, as I knew from the few conversations I had had with Dumas the elder—but what I will not pass over—because it amused me very much—is the study which Dumas made of me at table, whilst I was making one of him. I have always had a good appetite and—thank Heaven—have one still, and you will remember that I have confessed that I'm just a little fond of good cheer. The consequence is that when I am asked to lunch, I do lunch. Souverain, as the host, gave me a free hand in ordering the lunch on this occasion, and I

ordered what I liked, Ostend oysters, *fillet aux truffes*, a lobster salad, a salmis of partridges, asparagus *en branches*, and, for wines, some Sauterne to begin with, followed by some old Burgundy. Dumas *filis*, who ate as little as a bird and mixed his wine with some mineral water which he had brought with him in his carriage, watched me at work, smiling and exclaiming every now and then :

"That's it, oh ! that's just it. That's the true Paul de Kock, the *bon-vivant* as I had imagined him. It's superb."

But where the mirth of my young *confrère* really broke out was later on, when, at dessert, he—and Souverain as well, having said that they had had enough, I remarked, that as for me, I shouldn't mind a trifle more,—a slice of plumpudding with rum, for instance, and that to help the cheese down, I would willingly drink a glass of champagne.

"Champagne ! Plumpudding," cried Alexandre Dumas *filis*. "*Come, now I have my Paul de Kock complete.*"

I said nothing, because—I am sure of it—he had not spoken with any bad intention, but, in all truth, what a splendid opportunity the author of *La Dame aux Camélias* had given me, had I wanted to retort.

I might have said : "Yes, sir, you have your Paul de Kock complete at seventy, just as I have my Dumas *filis* already complete at forty. Each shows his own character, according to his epoch. I go on eating and drinking ; you have already stopped eating

and drinking. And, passing from physical to intellectual matters, from the stomach to the heart, I will wager that here also my old age shows superior to your youth, for I still believe in all that it is sweet and comforting to believe in, in this world, whilst you, if I am to judge from your writings, refuse to believe that there is anything good left."

But, I repeat it, M. Alexandre Dumas *fils* had been too kind in his conduct towards me, for me to appear vexed at his remark about my person, somewhat ironical as it was. It's only to-day—as a mild act of revenge—that I will allow myself to say something about him. Between ourselves I had fancied that meeting Paul de Kock, Dumas *fils*, were it but out of curiosity for the past, would have been interested in hearing the old novelist talk. Now, as a matter of fact, it was he who talked the whole time, all through lunch. I put up with it all the more readily since he spoke very well, and that I, by nature, am no great conversationalist. But when I next saw Souverain and he asked me how I had enjoyed myself at his *feast*, I said: "Oh! the *feast* was excellent and M. Dumas was charming. But, tell me I pray, why did he want to make my acquaintance? He did not let me say two words. He would have made my acquaintance just as well, if you had simply put my portrait in my place at table."

Of Baudry, the publisher, I have nothing to say,

except that he was the first to pay me for my works prices which were proportionate to the profits he anticipated making from them. And, as I had not been accustomed to this kind of treatment before, it seemed all the more pleasant, and calls for an acknowledgment on my part in these pages.

I will also pass over Lachapelle, who from 1842 to 1844, published several of my novels. I remember very little about him, except his aversion to part with his crowns, and his strange physical condition. In consequence of a terrible illness he had had, his bones were transparent. One could read a newspaper through his body. I recollect little else about him.

I have more to say about Alexandre Cadot, a worthy excellent man, for whom I have nothing but praise. And my son, in contracting a warm friendship with him—a friendship which during ten years has never wavered one instant—has proved to me that my esteem for Cadot was rightly placed, for Henry is not prodigal with his friendship. I have only one reproach to make to Cadot—not as a publisher, but as a host—and that is, that when one dines at his house, one is kept at table for six hours at a stretch. I remember being present at one dinner, amongst others, in his apartments in the Rue Serpente, together with my son and my daughter, Messieurs de Foudras, Paul Duplessis, and Xavier de Montépin. We had sat down to table at six o'clock, and at midnight, when coffee might reason-

ably have been expected, a truffled *poularde* was served. How could one resist the attractions of a truffled chicken even after six hours of knife and fork exercise? We were astonished at its appearing on the table, but we ate of it, we ate a lot of it, and Paul Duplessis, a novelist of talent, whose recent death was such a sad one,\* Paul Duplessis, who like me was a *belle fourchette*, deserves special mention for the way in which he rivalled me in tackling the fowl. But my son, who at table, somewhat follows the school of M. Dumas *fls*, and satisfies his appetite almost immediately, and who is never thirsty, could not help exclaiming :

"My word, Cadot, this isn't a dinner you're giving us, it's a trap you have laid for us. You want to send us home to-morrow as corpses—dead of indigestion."

At any rate the trap was not a cruel one, and I was joking just now, when I accused Cadot of feeding his guests too well. It is certainly better to do that than not to feed them at all, as so many hosts that I know are in the habit of doing. I won't name them, so they need not be afraid. I don't bear grudges of that sort.

What shall I say of Sartorius, my last publisher. For he, also, was a good and honest man. I say 'was,' for he died recently, died like Hubert, like Nicolas Barba, like Ladvocat, like Charlieu, Baudry, Lachapelle, Potter, and another whom I have

\* He died suddenly, in the street, of aneurismal rupture.

not named and shall not name, holding it useless, if not painful, to speak of a man, who in return for the fortune which he owed to me—a fortune, by the way, which he turned to no good account—never did me anything but injuries. Of all my publishers, only two are left whose hands I can shake, Cadot \* and Souverain. This is one of the penalties of a long career, the ranks thin out around one. Friends and enemies disappear. And it is enough to remember one's friends without doing one's enemies the honour of a single thought.

\* Cadot died in April 1870—a few months after Paul de Kock had written these lines.

## CHAPTER VII

One of the happy periods of my life. — My work for the Opéra-Comique. — *Une Nuit au Château.* — *Le Philosophe en voyage.* — *Les infidèles.* — *Le Muletier.* — A proposal from Merle. — One of my aversions. — What Nestor Roqueplan said to me on this subject. — A Journey to Rosny. — A visit to the *château* of the Duchesse de Berry. — Meeting the Duchess. — The little apron. — How later, on two separate occasions, I remembered this little apron. — The *foyer* of the Opéra-Comique. — Garat. — Hoffmann. — The ever youthful M. de Saint-Georges. — Boieldieu. — Hérold. — Florist and composer. — Other guests at the *soirées* in the *foyer* of the Opéra-Comique. — Perpignan, a censor of the departed school. — A way of knowing what is going on in Paris. — Story of Piberlo the actor, and Mistenflute, the painter. — The little servant girl. — Cuckold, beaten and... discontented. — But philosophic. — Perpignan's monomania. — I sacrifice my plates. — Adolphe Adam. — *Les Bergers de Syracuse.* — About tobacco. — Destruction of the Théâtre Feydeau. — A swan's song. — Theatrical managers.

One of the periods of my life which I remember with the greatest pleasure is that during which I was writing for the Opéra-Comique. I have always been very fond of music. A musician myself, how could I help being happy amongst musicians? For, reader, if you

are not aware of the fact, let me inform you—not without some vanity (one is always very proud of one's little talents)—that I have not only written the words, but the music also, of a number of songs and ditties, which were sung for years at charity concerts and also in public. I may mention specially my *Le Concert-Monstre*, which had the honour of being made a quadrille for a full orchestra, by the famous maestro Jullien, at the concerts in the Jardin Turc. I may also mention *Le Maître d'Ecole* and *Le Caisier*, which used to be sung with so much gaiety by Levassor and Joseph Kelm.

To return to my work for the Opéra-Comique; it is an unfortunate fact that I was not often lucky in my choice of collaborators, and the consequence is, that out of twenty acts which I wrote for this theatre, only one has kept its place on the *répertoire*—*Le Muletier*, which I did in collaboration with Hérold. Even this has not been played often for some time past, although it is a pearl. A pearl as music, I mean, of course. A pearl of which my libretto is nothing but the shell. And Nestor Roqueplan—whilst he was manager of the Opera-Comique—was of the same opinion as myself and all connoisseurs as to the musical merits of *Le Muletier*, for, differing from his predecessors, he mounted it at its revival in a manner worthy of its illustrious author.

My first comic opera, written in 1818, is called *Une Nuit au Château*, for which Mengal, my violin professor, wrote the music. Certainly the music

was not on a par with *Le Muletier*, but all the same there were good points about the score of *Une Nuit au Château*, and it was well received. It was acted by Juliet fils, Huet, Madame Desbrosses, and Madame Boulanger. My next piece was *Le Philosophe en Voyage*, a comic opera in three acts, written in collaboration with the composers, Frédéric Kreubé and Pradher. Alas, a hundred times alas!—(they are both dead and so I may speak out)—these were two composers who could boast of not possessing a grain of talent. Stop...Yes...Pradher had the talent of being the husband of a delicious artist. Delicious as a singer and as a woman. A gem, to whom Anna Thillon, later, could alone be compared. However, as the piece—so it appeared—was interesting, *Le Philosophe en Voyage* ran for a hundred nights, but by cutting out every night, now a duo, now a trio or quartette, it ended by becoming nothing but a comedy without music, a thing which was only moderately flattering to Kreubé and Pradher, if I, for my part, had no serious objections to make to the proceeding. *Les Infidèles*, a one-act piece, for which Mengal again wrote the music, followed, and then in the same year (1823), *Le Muletier*, sung by Lemonnier, Vizentini, Féréol, Madame Boulanger and the charming Madame Pradher. What a success it was. I was nearly mad with joy, although I readily gave a three-quarters' share of the merit in the triumph to Hérold, for, I must admit, the public, at the first performance of *Le Muletier*, had thought the piece

rather fast. A piece taken from one of La Fontaine's fables—just fancy! Oh, but that the charm of the music softened their hearts, these good people might possibly have got into a rage against me. We were very prudish in Paris under the Restoration, prudish out of doors, for *pose*, for they were less strict in their morals at the Court. And the proof of this is—a thing which consoled me for the attacks which were made against me for having written so fast a *libretto* as that of *Le Muletier*—that the piece was acted in 1825, by Royal Command at St. Cloud, and that nobody there complained of it. On the contrary, they not only applauded the music, but they laughed at the words. I heard that especially the Duchesse de Berry found the piece very amusing. A princess in head and heart was on my side, and so from that time onwards I could afford to laugh at the hypocritical blushes of middle-class gentlemen and at those of the good ladies, their wives.

A souvenir, which relates to this subject. As I say, I was much pleased with the sort of protection which the Duchess de Berry had deigned to accord to my *Muletier*, and I did not conceal the fact. One day Merle, who, as I have mentioned, was a Royalist to the tips of his fingers, said to me in the foyer of the Opéra Comique,—it was one summer's day in 1826 or 1827,—I don't remember the year:

“What are you doing to-morrow, Paul de Kock?”

“To morrow? I don't know. Have you anything to propose?”

“An excursion. Rather a long excursion, but with a good cabriolet and a good horse, we can cover fourteen leagues easily enough.”

“Fourteen leagues! Heavens, where do you want to take me to?”

To Rosny, to see the house of a lady of whom you are very fond, the *château* of Son Altesse Royale Madame la Duchesse de Berry. We will start at six in the morning; by nine o’clock we shall be at Trian, where we will stop for breakfast, and give our horse a rest; at eleven we will start off again and we shall arrive at Rosny at two or three o’clock. I have a letter from the Count de Mesnars, first equerry to Her Royal Highness, which will open all the doors.”

“But the Duchess?”

“The Duchess is not at home; so we shall be quite free to visit the apartments, the chapel, the park, and even the surrounding country; for, as we can’t return until the next day for fear of killing our horse, we will dine and sleep at the inn. Well, what say you?”

“I say—I say, that I accept your invitation.”

“Bravo! Well then, to-morrow, at my house, at six sharp.”

Now, agreeable as Merle’s excursion seemed to me, I had not accepted his invitation without some hesitation, and this hesitation was due to an aversion, which I used to feel as a young man, and which I feel still even now as I am writing these lines, which shows that it is deeply rooted in me,—an aver-

sion to travelling. Ridiculous as it may seem, I have never liked to leave my Penates. The longest excursion I ever took — I was twenty-three at the time — was to Beaugency, near Orléans, thirty-six leagues from Paris. I cannot help it. I hate moving, I hate inns, I hate the coaches. "But," you will cry, "coaching days are over. People travel by train now-a-days." Well, I hate trains even more, if it's possible for me to do so, than coaches. Brrr!—what grunting, grumbling, blowing, whistling, spitting machines! What blinding dust! What filthy smoke! To say nothing of the prospect of an explosion, or of running off the rails. When, for two summers, my son was living at Gournay, near Chelles, it was duty alone and because he was my son, that compelled me to go and see him.

Beaugency first, then Rosny. Such has been my experience in globe-trotting.

"What," said Nestor Roqueplan to me one day, "have you never wished to see Holland, the country of your father, of your brothers?"

"No."

"Have you never thought of visiting England, where you are almost as much admired as Dickens?"

"No."

"Or Russia, where your name is as well known as it is in France?"

"No."

"You have at least seen the sea at Havre, or at Dieppe?"

"I have never seen anything but the Seine—from the quays—and glimpses of her sister, the Marne, when I have been walking at Joinville or at Nogent."

"It's incredible."

Roqueplan was laughing, but suddenly growing serious, he added :

"Well, you're quite right; Paul de Kock, the Parisian writer *par exellence*, Paul de Kock should never leave Paris. When I come to think of it, I even wonder that you should have the audacity to spend the summer in the Romainville woods; your only country-seat should be a dozen flower-pots on the window sills of your apartment in the Boulevard Saint-Martin. When you die—may the day be far off—your epitaph should be: 'Here lies Paul de Kock, who was born in Paris, who died in Paris, and who never left Paris.' And if Paris is as grateful to you, as it ought to be, this epitaph will be inscribed on a tomb erected at its expense."

I don't ask as much as Roqueplan desired for me, believing that my children love me too well to allow anybody else to provide a resting-place for my remains; but, what I do say is that I expect to end my days there where I have always lived—in spite of the fact, that the changes which have been made during the last few years, have in some sort transformed the town into a new town, which has no longer the same charm in my eyes.

But, progress, you will say, progress pleases the young, if it vexes the old. And as, in the natural

order of things, it is the old who go first, the young, in working for themselves, are quite right not to trouble themselves about the regrets of the old people.

To return to my journey to Rosny.

I was to travel. Fourteen leagues. And what upset me the most, in the prospect of this journey, was to be forced to sleep away from home. On the other hand, it is true, I was going to see the home of an amiable princess. And then, I was certain not to be bored, with Merle as a travelling companion. And then again, I had given my word.

At six o'clock in the morning, I was at his house; at five minutes past six we got into our carriage; at nine o'clock we were at Triel, where we breakfasted; at eleven o'clock we set out again, and at half past two we alighted at Rosny. Oh, up till then nothing had gone wrong. Having put up our horse and trap, we made haste to the château, and whilst my companion presented his "Open, Sesame" to the porter, I began to stretch my legs in a magnificent avenue of century-old trees.

"Paul de Kock."

It was Merle who was calling me. He was standing on the threshold of the porter's lodge.

"What's up?"

"We're in bad luck to-day, my friend."

"We can't go in?"

"We can't. Madame is at home. She has just arrived—about an hour ago—with several ladies of

her suite, and her head-almoner, the Bishop of Amiens."

"Oh, indeed. Well then, I suppose we must go back to Paris."

"No, wait. The porter has gone with my letter to ask for the Count the Mesnars' orders."

"Oh, if the Count de Mesnars is there?"

"He is, and he'll tell us if we can at least take a walk in the park. *Parbleu!* if Her Highness's grand almoner wasn't at the *château*, I'm sure there would be no difficulty about our getting in. But, just fancy, a Bishop!—"

"Wouldn't like to run the risk of meeting two profane writers such as we are. I can quite understand that."

"I'm awfully sorry, dear fellow, to have brought you so far for nothing, but Madame was not expected back to Rosny before next week and—"

"Don't say anything about it, my friend. It's not your fault. But I say, isn't that the porter over there coming back?"

"Yes, so it is. And that's M. de Mesnars following him. M. de Mesnars has taken the trouble of coming to us. That's a good sign."

Merle ran to meet the first equerry. He talked with him for some minutes. The conversation was to our advantage, for, as soon as M. de Mesnars had left him, my comrade beckoned to me to come up, with a radiant look on his face.

"Well?"

"Well ! We can go all over the place. Those are the Princess's orders. M. de Mesnars would not have dared, on his own authority, to grant us permission for anything more than a walk in the park, but when Madame heard that we had come all the way from Paris on purpose to see her house, she said : 'My presence here must not stand in the way of their pleasure.' M. de Mesnars asked who was with me and I told him your name."

"And wasn't she shocked?"

"Not in the least. They're all witty people here."

As he spoke, Merle took my arm and proudly we walked up to the château. We were shown all over it by a footman, with the exception of the room occupied at that moment by the Princess and her suite. This room, her boudoir, served also as a studio, for, as may or may not be known, the Princess painted like a real artist. We visited the drawing-rooms, the dining-room, the library, the bedrooms of the Duchess, of the Duc de Bordeaux, and of his sister, Mademoiselle. All these apartments were furnished with elegance rather than sumptuously ; one felt everywhere that this was the abode of a woman of taste. But what pleased me particularly was a picture gallery, where I noticed a superb, full-length portrait of the Princess. It was a master-piece.

From the apartments we went to the chapel, where stood the monument which contained the heart of the Duc de Berry. After that, our guide having taken leave of us, we were able, as fancy guided us,

to wander under the shady trees of the park, in the winding avenues of the gardens laid out in the English fashion. At each turn we found some new view to admire, little thinking that our good star reserved us a still more pleasant surprise.

Six o'clock had struck and it was time for us to get back to our inn. It was long since breakfast and we were hungry.

We were walking along a path, which we thought would bring us out into the long drive, when suddenly there appeared, at a stone's throw from us, coming out of an avenue to the left, a number of ladies. They were walking in our direction.

"The Duchess," murmured Merle.

"By Jove. Let's go back."

"No. It would look like running away. You don't object to see the original at close quarters, after having so much admired the portrait?"

"Certainly not."

"Well then, here we are. Let us stay where we are!"

"All right."

The Duchesse de Berry, accompanied by the Comtesse d'Hautefort, the Marquise de Béthisy, and two other ladies, whose names I have forgotten, (though Merle, who knew the French Court by heart, told me who they were) came walking towards us. We went to the side of the road, to make way for them to pass, and remained standing in respectful attitudes with our hats in our hands.

Madame, who must have been about thirty at that time, was not pretty, in the literal sense of the word ; she was attractive. She possessed that grace which rivals beauty. But what struck me most about her was her toilette. Whilst all the ladies in her suite were dressed, as for a reception at the Tuileries, in silk or in velvet, the Duchess wore a simple calico gown, such as shopwomen wear in their shops in Paris, and, an original detail, there was a taffety apron over the dress.

A Royal Highness in an apron ! I had not expected to see that.

I am not conceited enough to think that she had come on purpose to see us, because she had been told that the author of *Le Muletier*, that play which had amused her, was one of the visitors to her domain, and yet, if my spectacles did not betray me, I can certify that Madame looked at both of us with some curiosity, as she passed us, saying in a ringing voice :

“Well, gentlemen, how do you like my Rosny ?”

“Charming, Madame,” said Merle, “like everything that belongs to your Royal Highness.”

“Well, you must come and see it again. The park is magnificent in the autumn. *Au revoir*, gentlemen.”

With these words, the Duchess went on, followed by her ladies, and Merle and I pursued our way, highly pleased with this meeting, and vieing with each other in praises of Madame’s elegant figure, the

charm of her voice, the expression of her face, affable and distinguished at once, and the simplicity of her dress. Oh, I could not forget the calico dress and the little apron.

Three or four years later, I had twice occasion—within a month of each other—to remember my meeting with the Duchesse de Berry in the park of Rosny. The first time it was with a smile; the second, with a sigh.

The first time was in June 1830, one evening when the Duc d'Orléans was receiving the King of France and the King of Naples at the Palais Royal.

I was passing through the square at about nine o'clock. Somebody pointed out to me one of the gala-carriages which at that moment were entering into the courtyard of the Palace and said:

"Madame is in that carriage."

"Not with her little apron on," I thought.

The second time was after the July days. "The three glorious days," as they used to be called then, when I heard that the Duchesse de Berry had left France to follow Charles X to Holyrood.

"She'll never walk again in her dear park at Rosny, with her little apron on," said I.

And, indeed, Madame never saw this estate again, a place which was all the more dear to her in that she held it from her husband. After the July Revolution, the Rosny estate was sold and parcelled out. Certain individuals are crazy to possess what has be-

longed to the great, which is their way of consoling themselves for being doomed to remain nobodies. The castle alone, I am told, remains standing. If I could be carried there on a litter, I would refuse to go. I might meet some fat tradeswoman there, grown rich, in a trailing dress, and that would spoil my remembrance of the good Duchess—as they used to call her in a district where she did so many acts of kindness—in her little calico apron.

From 1818 to 1829—when the Opera Comique removed from the Salle Feydeau, which was falling in ruins, to the Place Ventadour—I never missed going, at least twice a week, to spend an hour or two in the *foyer* of this theatre, a *foyer* which resembled a drawing-room, and a drawing-room such as there have existed very few in Paris, where all the most distinguished artists used to meet.

I am not much of a conversationalist, as I have said, and consequently am more inclined to listen—to those to whom it seemed to me worth while to listen—rather than to get them to listen to me, and in this way I have been able to study the leading artists of every kind whom I used to meet in the *foyer* of the Opera Comique.

And shall I call them up before your eyes? Another sort of necrological review! But can the living complain if one talks to them of the dead, when these dead are worthy of being talked about?

I make no selection, I take each figure as it comes

back to my mind, without troubling myself about his greater or lesser right to celebrity.

To begin with, Garat. It was in 1818, when my first piece was being rehearsed at the Théâtre Feydeau, that I saw Garat for the first time, in the green-room. Always elegant, always foppishly dressed, although he was then past fifty, always lisping, and always laughing with a laugh which was, I assure you, anything but contagious. Garat's laugh used to sound like the creaking of a door on rusty hinges. One could hardly believe, as one listened to this irritating noise, that this was the same voice which so delighted its hearers, when he sang. Madame Boulanger, who was acting in *Une Nuit au Château*, was one of Garat's pupils. He was present at two rehearsals of the piece, and, on the evening before the first performance, Madame Boulanger having sung a verse in a way which displeased him, he began to sing it himself, in the midst of the crowd of visitors and actors. Oh! on that day, I forgave him his horrid laugh. Madame Boulanger was still young in 1818 and had a pretty voice, but she could not sing my song like Garat. It began :

\* Oui, les femmes de ce pays  
Sont fidèles à leurs maris,  
Tout comme celles de Paris.

Garat had the vitality, the 'go' of the Gascon that

\* "Yes, the women of this country  
"Are faithful to their husbands—  
"Just like the women of Paris."

he was. He used to tell wonderful anecdotes from his recollections of the court of Marie-Antoinette, of the Directoire and the Empire. Elleviou, although he had long since left the stage, was never happier than when amongst his old comrades, and used to converse very pleasantly also, but when Hoffmann, the critic of *Les Débats* and author of *Le Roman d'une Heure* and *Les Rendez-vous Bourgeois*, was in the *foyer* of the Théâtre Feydeau, "nobody else got any show," as Garat used to say, burying his chin spitefully in his cravat. But, apart from Garat, nobody minded this at all. Hoffmann was witty to the tips of his fingers—I might almost say, to the tips of his claws, for he was bitter. But his sarcasm was so amusing, so bright, so original, that the person clawed by him was always the first to laugh at the scratch. And note that he used to stammer—an infirmity which usually drives listeners away. Picard, who was no friend of his because he had often handled his plays very roughly, used to say of Hoffmann: "He stammers on purpose, so as to get time to think over his impertinences." As for me, I was fortunate enough to please Hoffmann, and he gave me the proof of this on several occasions. Perhaps it was because I cared as little for talking as he cared little for holding his tongue.

Amongst the writers with whom I made friendly acquaintance at the Opéra Comique, I may mention Emmanuel Dupaty, the author of *Picaros et Diégo*, and of a poem called *Les Délateurs*, which

created an immense stir under the Restoration ; Alexandre Duval, another man who was certainly not a Republican ; old Bouilly, who had been nicknamed ‘the tearful story-teller’ ; Scribe ; Panard ; Saint-Georges, who like myself was a very young man in those days. Ought I to say “in those days,” when by grace of Providence (no doubt in return for his many acts of charity), this happy M. de Saint-Georges is still to be seen to-day, after a lapse of forty years—as straight in the back, as fresh in complexion, and as black, as to his hair, as he was on the first day on which we met. Auber said to me, last winter, speaking of M. de Saint-Georges : “He’s the Laferrière of dramatic authors.” And the sly old octogenarian added at once, with a laugh : “In his obstinacy in remaining young. Don’t misunderstand me.”

Amongst musicians, I may name Cherubin, Berthon, Gaveaux ; Boieldieu, of men of genius the most modest and the best hearted ; Auber ; Hérold, who rivalled Hoffmann in caustic *verve* ; Kreutzer, the able bandmaster at the Opera ; Panseron, styled ‘Nevertheless’ ; Caraffa, Frederic Kreubé and Pradher ; Blangini, who had been the master of Pauline Borghese’s orchestra, and, according to *la chronique scandaleuse*, which he was careful not to contradict, to some extent also the master of her heart ; Batton, who combined the glory of art with the profits of trade. He kept an artificial-flower business. And why did he not stick to flowers all his life ? We

should then have avoided writing, in collaboration, a comic opera in three acts, the very name of which I try to forget, whose terrible fall no doubt contributed, in no small measure, to shake the old foundation-stones of the theatre in the Rue Feydeau.

Amongst painters, Carle and Horace Vernet, Isabey, Picot, Alaux, Ciceri.

Amongst actors and actresses of the Opéra-Comique ; Martin, Moreau, the handsome Lemonnier, Gavaudan, Ponchard, Férol, Baptiste, Vizentini, Lafeuillade, Huet, Cholet, old mother Desbrosses, Mesdames Pradher, Boulanger, Rigaut, Gavaudan, Ponchard, Lemonnier and Mesdemoiselles Jenny Colon and Jawureck.

Great artists of other theatres used also occasionally to be present at what might be called the *soirées* of the Opéra-Comique *foyer*. I have met there Talma and Mlle. Mars ; Lays, an opera-star—at that time near its setting ; Ligier, Armand, Madame Pasta, from the Italian theatre ; Léontine Fay, from the Gymnase ; Minette, from the Vaudeville. I also made the acquaintance there of a man who, by reason of his profession, which naturally enough is not held in very high esteem by theatrical people—he was Censor—should have been very ill at his ease in such a gathering, but who, on the contrary, was always received there with open arms, for his great wit and merriment.

Perpignan was the name of this censor, who belonged to a school of censors, now of the past. His

fund of good humour was inexhaustible. Funny stories and witty sayings poured like water from his mouth. Every evening he knew all that had happened during the day in the world of artists, and used to hasten to the Théâtre Feydeau to tell us all about it, drawing a few select friends aside into one corner of the foyer for the purpose—as his stories were often of a fast nature.

"I can't understand it, old fellow," Hérold, who did not object to fast stories, used to say to him. "You must have detectives in your service, so as always to be the first to know all the scandals."

"You are quite right," said Perpignan, "I have a pocket-police, but everybody else can have just such a police of his own, and the only thing is to know how to make use of it."

"And of what is it composed?"

"Of all the idiots whom I have the honour of knowing. When I meet them, I stroke them down and question them. Idiots are almost always conceited and talkative. When they want to make a man laugh, especially when that man has the reputation of being fond of laughing, they don't mind telling their own adventures, even when the story is altogether against them. And so you see, my dear Hérold, by simply walking up and down the boulevards, from the corner of the Rue Louis-le-Grand to the corner of the Rue Montmartre, from three o'clock to five, I have no difficulty in getting all the queer or funny items of news of the day. I am al-

ways certain to meet, during my two hours' walk, at least half-a-dozen duffers, bursting to prove to me how stupid they are, by telling me all their private affairs and amply repaid if, on quitting them, I say: ‘Thanks, that’s a splendid story of yours.’ ‘I thought you would think so! But keep it to yourself, because, as you may imagine, I don’t want people to know that—’ ‘Of course not, what do you take me for? Anything confided to me is sacred.’”

A good story which I heard from Perpignan, and which I have used, with certain modifications in one of my novels, is the following. Its heroes were a comic actor of the Variétés theatre, one of the most popular actors under Charles X and during the first years of Louis Philippe’s reign, and a portrait-painter who was also greatly the fashion at that time.

We will call the actor Piberlo, and the painter Mistenflute. As Cuckolds generally manage to leave descendants, we must not risk giving offence to their families, even after forty years, by mentioning their real names.

Well, Piberlo, the actor, had a wife, a pretty wife, whom he used to neglect sadly, first because he had been married to her for ten years, and secondly because he was a thorough rake, and like all rakes, whose senses have been blunted by excesses, he found no charm in the healthy joys of conjugal felicity.

Madame Piberlo, who loved her husband, put up

with this conduct for a long time, protesting only with tears and gentle reproaches, against a neglect which was so insulting to her personal attractions. But women tire of weeping, especially when it is of no use. One day Madame Piberlo wiped her eyes and said: "Oh, it's so, is it? He goes his way. Very well, then I'll go mine. If I meet a good chance, may my husband lose his nose, to which he owes all his triumphs, if I don't seize upon it."

The good chance presented itself. One of Madame Piberlo's lady-friends had had her portrait painted by Mistenflute, the painter. The portrait was very good, it was very well painted, and cheap, when the artist's standing was remembered. This was Piberlo's own opinion.

"Well then," said his wife, "you won't object to my also having my portrait painted by M. Mistenflute."

"I, not at all, if it amuses you."

"It will amuse me very much."

"All right. Get your portrait painted by M. Mistenflute, my dear."

Now it was less the painting than the painter that Madame Piberlo was thinking about when she made her request to her husband. Madame Piberlo had met M. Mistenflute at a friend's house; he was a fine man of about thirty-five years of age, and had pleased her at first sight. On his side, M. Mistenflute had displayed an extreme gallantry to Madame Piberlo, of whose conjugal misfortunes he was a-

ware.

Under such circumstances, a rapid solution was inevitable. At the first sitting, Mistenflute did little more than sketch out the lines of his sitter's face, but, on the other hand, he made a full confession of his passion, and at the second sitting, encouraged by an eloquent blush, the painter, making way for the lover, had become pressing. This time also he had been resisted, but it is to be feared that at the third sitting, Madame Piberlo must have punished her husband for his infidelity, all the more so because, to render this sitting a pleasanter one, it had been agreed that it should take place in a private room in a restaurant, accompanied by oysters, truffles and Champagne. And Mistenflute had special reasons for wishing this sitting to take place outside, for although he was a bachelor—and as such free to do what he liked—he had a pretty servant-girl, Catherine, a girl from Burgundy, at his house, whom he had had the weakness to make his mistress, but who was as jealous as she was young and winsome. Whenever a lady came to sit to her master, Catherine used to watch at the keyhole to see what was going on between him and the lady, and if she saw or heard anything suspicious, she used to make terrible scenes as soon as the lady has gone. Such a scene, for instance, as the following, which took place after Madame Piberlo's second sitting:

"So, that lady's to your taste, monsieur. You can't deny it?"

"What? What are you talking about, Catherine? What lady do you mean?"

"Why, the lady who has just gone out, of course? Not the Queen of Spades!"

"You're mad."

"Ah, I'm mad! I suppose you'll deny that you kissed her."

"I kiss Madame Piberlo?—I?—You mean to say you saw me?"

"Don't try to be so clever. I didn't see it because you had put a canvas before the keyhole—and that's a proof that you were intending some dirty trick. But a canvas doesn't prevent one's hearing, if it does prevent one's seeing, and I heard the sound of kisses very clearly. I heard them so clearly indeed that I had to hold myself back with all my might, or I should have rushed into the room and have let your fine lady have it with my fists."

"That would have been a pretty to do."

"Well, and what for does she let you pull her about? A married woman—its disgraceful! It would serve her right if her husband were to give her a good hiding. And then, these actors—for I know him well, your Madame Piberlo's husband—he's an actor—an actor at the Variétés. I've seen him act, and stupid enough he looks on the stage."

"Well and what about it?"

"Well, perhaps fellows in that trade don't mind that sort of thing."

"You're mad. I tell you once again, Catherine,

Madame Piberlo is worthy of all respect."

"Yes, well if she is so worthy of respect as all that, you mark me, monsieur, you write and tell her that you are forced to give up painting her portrait, that you are starting on a journey—that you're ill—anything you like, provided that you don't see her again."

"Oh, bother, you tire me. If I were to listen to you, I should soon have to give up painting women altogether."

"Paint ugly women and then I'll say nothing."

"And I tell you to go hang with your jealousy."

"Is that your last word? You refuse to write to Madame Piberlo to tell her to get her portrait painted elsewhere?"

"Most certainly, I refuse."

"All right, so much the worse for you. I have given you warning, you shall pay for this, and she also."

"All right, all right. In the meantime, perhaps you'll be good enough to get my steak ready, that will be much better than talking nonsense."

Thanks to his ingenious precaution of placing a canvas before the keyhole of his studio, during his two amourous sittings, Mistenflute felt himself master of the situation. So, without troubling himself about Catherine's threats, or the fit of sulking which she indulged in all day, he punctually kept his appointment next day and conducted Madame Piberlo, in a hermetically closed cab, to the Méridien, a restaurant on the Boulevard du Temple, which was famous for

the excellence of its filleted soles *au gratin* and the comfortable furniture of its private rooms.

In the meantime, just when this couple was sitting down to table, Piberlo was at his theatre, rehearsing a vaudeville in which he had an important part. Just at the finish of one of the principal scenes, which had gone off with a rush, to the enthusiastic applause of the author, he was talking with a comrade, behind one of the side scenes, when the door-keeper of the theatre came up to him in a mysterious manner and said :

"M. Piberlo, a word with you, if you please."

"What's up?"

His comrade had discreetly withdrawn. The door-keeper continued :

"M. Piberlo, there's a woman downstairs in my room who says that she absolutely must speak to you at once."

"At once? I am rehearsing, I can't leave the rehearsal. What sort of a woman is she?"

"She looks like a servant."

"A servant?"

"Yes, and so I began to tell her that when you were rehearsing, it was quite useless to ask to see you. But she cried out in such a rage : 'What! when I want to do him a service, when a terrible misfortune is hanging over him, which thanks to me, he can escape, do you mean to say that M. Piberlo will refuse to see me.'"

"A service? A great misfortune? Oh! that's

quite a different matter. The rehearsal can wait."

So saying, Piberlo darted downstairs to the door-keeper's lodge. The woman who wanted to see him, was, as you have guessed, Catherine—Catherine, Mistenflute's servant and housekeeper. Her cheeks were blazing, her eyes were flashing fire, her breath came and went in gasps, like a person who is violently agitated.

She recognized Piberlo.

"So, here you are at last, sir. It's not a pity. Come quick. I have a cab waiting. We may yet be in time."

"In time? Where? For what?"

"I'll tell you all about it in the cab. Come."

"Excuse me, pretty one. I must really ask, before going off with you—"

"Oh! you must know at once. All right."

Seizing Piberlo by the arm, Catherine dragged him into the yard, and there, motioning him to stoop down, for he was as tall as she was short, she cried in his ear:

"You are married, sir, are you not?"

"Yes."

"And you love your wife?"

"What? What a question! Of course, I love my wife! But..."

"Well then you make a very great mistake. She doesn't care a bit for you, since she makes a fool of you."

"A fool of me! What! What are you saying, girl?"

"I say that your wife is unfaithful to you. At least if she hasn't been so yet, she soon will be. It's not the inclination that she lacks, and as to my master, M. Mistenflute, he asks nothing better than to....."

"M. Mistenflute?—The painter?"

"Yes, of course. M. Mistenflute, the painter, who, as we are talking here, is in a private room with Madame Piberlo in a restaurant."

"Oh."

"That riles you, eh?"

"Madame Piberlo unfaithful! And you know where she is, the wretch, with her lover?"

"Of course I know, since I have come here to take you to them."

"Take me there, take me there at once. Perfidious Eleonora—I will kill her, yes, I will kill her. I will wash my dishonour in her blood."

Striding along at Catherine's side, Piberlo soon reached the cab, which was waiting on the boulevard, opposite the Passage des Panoramas.

The girl jumped into the cab and said to the coachman: "Drive to where I first took you, in front of the Gaîté."

Piberlo followed her into the carriage, which immediately drove off.

True it must be that rakes are constitutionally different from virtuous men, that is to say, that with them, vicious instincts dominate all other motives. Entirely taken up with her plans of vengeance, and besides, being ten leagues from the thought, that,

under the circumstances, her companion could have eyes for such trifles, Catherine, in springing into the cab, had unintentionally displayed, a wee bit higher up than the garter perhaps, a pair of limbs, such as many fashionable ladies in Paris would have envied, a pair of limbs of sculptural construction, a pair of limbs full of seductive promises, a pair of limbs fit to draw a man after them to the four corners of Paris ; a pair of limbs such as Madame Pi-berlo assuredly did not possess. At least, the sudden sight of them awoke this idea in our actor's brain, and this idea turned his thoughts into a very different direction.

He was sitting opposite to Catherine, looking steadily at her. For, apart from her beautiful limbs, she wasn't bad, the little peasant-girl, not at all bad.

He took her hand.

"And so, little one," he began, "you are in M. Mistenflute's service?"

"Yes."

"You do everything for him?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that if it distresses you so much that he should make love to women, it is because you have your reasons for wishing to keep for yourself what he gives to other ladies... I mean that you have certain rights on him... very tender rights....."

"I don't deny it, sir. I do like my master very much."

"Oh, indeed. Well, he's not to be pitied, the fel-

low, to be liked by such a nice girl as you."

"Bah. Go and tell him that. He cares a lot for my liking him."

"Oh. So he makes a habit of being untrue to you?"

"He does nothing else. Why, it's barely a week since he made your wife's acquaintance and—"

"And he's a monster, this M. Mistenflute, nothing else. My child?... What's your name, little one?"

"Catherine, sir."

"My little Katie. Your master is a wretch."

"Oh, that he is."

"Who does not deserve to possess such a jewel as you."

"Oh, I am no jewel, and yet, if my master wanted it, he could be so happy with me. To begin with, I am always thinking how to please him."

"Poor little Katie."

"Sir! Sir! What are you doing, sir? What are you kissing me for?"

"Because you are crying, Katie. It touches me. I am drying your eyes."

"Thanks, I can dry them myself."

"No, you'll never dry them as well as I can dry them. I say, Katie, I have something to propose to you."

"What is it?"

"Your master is a scoundrel—my wife is, is a—wretch."

"Yes, indeed. It's my opinion also that your wife

isn't worth much."

"Well, instead of torturing ourselves about people who betray us, why not seek to console each other mutually."

"What? Well, there's an idea!"

"A very sensible idea, my little Katie, my dear little Katie. You leave M. Mistenflute's service, you leave him to-day, without a word of notice. You don't set foot in his house again. To begin our mutual consolation, we'll dine, tête-à-tête in a restaurant, and to-morrow I'll take a fine room for you in a fine part of the town—a fine room which I'll furnish for you. Oh! I earn as much money as M. Mistenflute, don't you be afraid. And with me you won't be a seryant; you'll have nothing to do all day long but to be fond of me. Settled, eh, my angel? It's settled, is it not? To the devil with your master! To the devil with my wife! Let us have our revenge. Let us take a terrible revenge."

Stupefied with astonishment, Catherine had allowed Piberlo to speak without interrupting him, and this silence encouraged our comedian to further extremities. So whilst, with one hand he clasped the servant-girl's waist, with the other he began to draw down the blinds of the carriage. The imminence of her danger recalled Catherine to her senses. With a violent effort she freed herself and then, redder than ever, red with anger and red with disgust, she cried out: 'Is it possible. Oh! I might tell a hundred people this story and not one would

believe it. What, you know that at this very moment your wife is dining in a restaurant with a lover and that's all the effect it produces on you. You want—”

“I want you, my little Katie. I don't care for my wife any more. I don't care twopence for my wife. I love you alone.”

“And I, I abhor you. Ah, I was quite right in thinking that people in your trade have no manliness left in them, no heart.”

“Yes, I have a heart, my little blue bird. And here, I offer it to you in this kiss.”

“Come. Will you let go of me, I say.”

“No, I won't let go of you. Katie, a kiss, one only kiss, a pledge of my happiness.”

“Yes, well, here you are, here's a pledge of your happiness. And now go and look for your wife by yourself. Good night.”

So saying, Catherine freed herself once more from Piberlo, striking him a violent blow in the face with her first. Then opening the door, she jumped out of the cab, and so disappeared amidst the crowd on the boulevard.

“Here we are, governor ! Here's the Gaité,” said the cabdriver, rousing Piberlo from the painful torpor into which the little servant's energetic and victorious defense had plunged him. It was true, he was at the Gaité. But what then? What use was it for him to have come there, when he did not know at which restaurant it was that his wife was lunching with M. Mistenflute?

"Well," continued the cabdriver, seeing that his fare did not budge, "are you going to get out, governor? So, the lady who was with you has left?"

"Yes," said Piberlo, with an attempt at a smile. "She got out on the way to have a tooth pulled out, and I, I have changed my mind, I shan't get out here. Take me back to the Variétés, old boy."

And back he went to his rehearsal, having made up his mind, since he had not been able to take his wife in the act, at least to give her a severe scolding.

But even this consolation was denied to him, for when he opened the attack with this question, which he thought would confound her: "Where and with whom did you lunch to-day, madame?"

"Rue de l'Echiquier, monsieur," said Madame Piberlo, quite calmly, "with my friend, Madame Dubois."

And there were no proofs with which to confound the traitress, and besides he was afraid that if he told his wife what he knew, which she could deny by accusing Catherine of telling lies, she might retort by laughing at him over the misadventure which had just befallen him and which it was impossible for him to deny.

"Very well," said the prudent husband, nodding his head.

And that was all. He carried his investigations no further. He even allowed his wife to continue her sittings at Mistenflute's studio, saying to himself no doubt, that if after all she were not guilty—for a

lady may lunch with a gentleman without any harm —there was no reason to prevent her having her portrait; and, that if she were guilty, he must just put up with it, for nothing that he could do would undo what was done.

But the strangest thing of all is that this husband, who to escape being laughed at by his wife, had put up with a grievance which probably was very well founded, should rush off and relate the whole story to Perpignan, whom he knew to be a kind of walking newspaper. His adventure seemed so very laughable to him, himself, that he felt Perpignan must share in his fun.

Perpignan was quite right, idiots would supply the rope for their own hanging, provided they were told whilst being hanged: "Oh, what a fine rope. It's only you who have so fine a rope."

A last word about Perpignan, which will bring a smile to the lips of those who knew him, because it will remind them of one of this amusing fellow's queer crazes. This craze of his was to draw horses everywhere and on everything. A certain manager of the Palais-Royal theatre, whom I will not name, as I do not wish to bring a blush to his cheek, although it is long since he resigned his post, had a hobby that was far less innocent. From morning to night, in his office, he did nothing but draw, with his pen, sketches... how shall I say? ...Rabelais would have said it outright, but then I'm not Rabe-

lais ! Sketches... sketches, in short... of certain attractions, the almost absolute lack of which in Déjazet was one of the chief reasons of her ease in effecting disguises. You understand, don't you ? And this hobby of the theatrical manager was the cause of not a few ladies—who committed the imprudence of approaching him too suddenly—having to repent it, on finding him plunged in his all too realistic drawings. Perpignan's imagination was not quite so *décolleté*. Horses were enough for him : horses seen from the front, horses in profile, in three-quarters' face, horses racing or resting, horses galloping or sleeping. And to tell the truth, he did not draw them at all badly, as Horace Vernet himself admitted. But he certainly used to draw too many of them. If you asked Perpignan to dinner, he would slip out, before it was announced, into the dining-room, and during the time that he escaped your notice, would get out his stick of Indian ink and draw a horse on each of the meat-plates, under the soup-plates. He very nearly got himself into serious trouble, in Algiers, where he was sent some years after the conquest, with the officers who lived in the same hotel as himself, for persisting in ornamenting their plates, day after day, in spite of their wishes on the subject. These gentlemen were hungry, and just as they were going to help themselves to a slice of meat, they would find a horse on their plates and be forced to call for others. At first the officers laughed, but afterwards they got angry. Perpignan was obliged, in fear of

a sword-thrust, to give up his sketching parties on the table d'hôte crockery and consoled himself by drawing his favourite subject all over the rooms of the Casbah, even in the most private places.

"I can't help it," he used to say to me. "It's not my fault, but when I havn't drawn a dozen horses in the day, I feel quite ill."

To prevent his being ill, whenever he came to dine at my house, I used to bring him a dozen plates, before my other guests arrived. He then indulged his folly to the full of its bent, and after that was quite sensible again.

A witty man, who was a man of talent besides, whose acquaintance I made about 1826, in the foyer of the Opera Comique, was Adolphe Adam. Was! always was. Yet another who is no more. Yet another who died in the prime of his life, like Hérold, with whom, as I think, he had many points of resemblance, both in character and musical talents, and who, I may add, loved him like a brother. Younger than I by about ten years, Adam showed me from the very first that he liked me. My style, as a novelist, pleased him ; in which respect he differed from Hérold, who used to blame it for being too fast. And this was really the reason why I only wrote *Le Muletier* with Hérold ; he did not forget that my piece had provoked some disapproval, on the first night, and this, he said—not without justice as I admit—very nearly spoiled the success of his music. And

it is certain that M. de Planard, whom he took, after me, as collaborator, did not give him the same reasons for complaint. *Marie* has no resemblance whatever with *Le Muletier*.

Adam, who in 1826 was still only writing music for vaudevilles, was not so rigorous towards me. "Write me a 'book' in verse, Paul de Kock," he often said to me. I don't remember what prevented me—to my great present regret—from doing what he asked me, but I remember very well, that after a *fête* which we visited together, I told him a plot I had thought out for a comic opera in two acts, which pleased him very much. This *fête* was given by a popular poetical and lyrical society known as *Les Bergers de Syracuse*. This society, which was flourishing in 1826, was composed of people of every kind of trade, tailors, hairdressers, bootmakers, hatters, hosiers, grocers, all mad admirers of Apollo and of Erato. On joining this society, each member adopted some name in keeping with its appellation. Lycidas, Corydon, Palémon, Tyrpis, and so on. Women were not admitted to the purely lyrical and poetical meetings, for fear they should disturb the shepherds reciting their idylls and singing their songs. But on the solemn day, on which the feast of "The Great Shepherd," their supreme head, was celebrated, the shepherds brought their shepherdesses with them. And they were quite right to do so, for there was dancing at this *fête*, and a ball, at which, had there been men only, shepherds though they

might be, it would certainly have been lacking in picturesqueness.

My tailor, who was a Shepherd of Syracuse, had sent me as a dramatic author an invitation for the feast of "The Great Shepherd." I asked him for another, for Adam. Adam was a musician, so there could be no difficulty about it, and Adam was duly invited. The *fête* took place at Belleville, at the Ile d'Amour. It was on an evening in the month of July. We arrived just as the shepherds, before dancing with the shepherdesses, were singing a chorus in honour of Sylvander, the Great Shepherd, raised aloft, in their midst, on a rustic platform in the garden. At his side was a girl, crowned with myrtle and roses, who, we were told, represented the nymph Arethusa, patroness of the corporation. Whilst one listens, one can look, and whilst looking one can ever omit to listen. The chorus was, no doubt, very fine, but we much preferred to examine the shepherdesses. I won't assert that they were all pretty, and certainly not that they were Sicilian, in appearance and in language. These shepherdesses of Syracuse were obviously artificial-flower makers and linendrapers' assistants from the Rue Saint-Denis, or the Rue Saint-Martin. But they all wore such a pretty dress, a white frock and a large straw hat trimmed with blue or pink ribbons, and they looked so happy, so ready to be jolly, that Adam and I felt quite ready to submit to the sway of the crooks of any two of them, whom we might choose, and

who would deign to accept us, for a few hours, as their shepherds.

So soon as the chorus was over, the shepherds, with their little ebony flutes, fitted with ivory, hanging from their button-holes, marched past the Great Shepherd and the Nymph Arethusa, and then the ball was opened. A ball, with songs between each dance. No, the shepherds of Syracuse were not satisfied with dancing alone, they had to sing also. And these regular interruptions between the quadrilles, which at first seemed to me stupid, were later on voted an excellent invention both by Adam and myself. Whilst the shepherds were singing, the shepherdesses walked under the trees in the gardens and we walked there also, and could talk with the two who had won our hearts, with greater freedom than in the ball-room. Our two shepherdesses were Mesdemoiselles Idalie and Aminta, otherwise Josephine and Eliza, an artificial-flower maker and a polisher. And so at ten o'clock, having been able to persuade these ladies that there would be enough shepherdesses, without them, left to the shepherds in the Ile d'Amour, we took them off to supper at the Vendanges de Bourgogne.

My tailor bitterly reproached me afterwards, for this abduction of shepherdesses, which had greatly vexed his brother-shepherds.

"It's not right," he said, "what you have done there. No, that's not good behaviour. And do you know what the consequence will be. Idalia and

Aminta will no longer be received at the ‘hamlet.’ The Great Shepherd has declared it solemnly ; their names have been struck off the list of shepherdesses.”

“Bah,” I said, “what harm have they done? They were hungry and we offered them the wing of a chicken. That won’t prevent them from returning to their sheep, when you call them back.”

Lycidas, otherwise Bertrand, my tailor, shook his head.

“We shall never recall them,” said he, decisively. “We have our standard of morality, at the hamlet, sir, and we don’t want to have anything to do with shepherdesses, who are immodest enough to go off with our guests...”

In a word, this society of Shepherds of Syracuse, ridiculous as it was in the foolish pomposity of its ceremony and the pretensions of its members to rank as poets and musicians, had in itself nothing worthy of blame. These workpeople who met together, under names borrowed from ancient pastorals, to sing and dance, were worth quite as much as those who assemble to-day to discuss their civil rights in front of jugs of blue wine. And further, the popular fêtes of those days had the advantage over those of to-day, that one could go to them without running the risk of being suffocated. The people probably drank as much in those days as they drink now, but they did not smoke. Two or three years ago, I wanted to see a popular ball in Paris, out of curiosity,

and I saw nothing—clouds of smoke filled the room—but I smelt a good deal and I made haste to escape. Poor people of Paris, is then one of your most precious senses, the sense of smell, so weakened, that you can find pleasure in unceasingly saturating yourself with the filthy stench of that accursed plant, tobacco? The people will answer me by saying that everybody in Paris, from the top to the bottom, smokes now-a-days, rich and poor, artists and shopkeepers, workmen and noblemen. Well, to this I reply, that it's so much the worse, if everybody smokes now-a-days in Paris—and, I presume, in the provinces also—because, as I think, the tobacco habit is an odious habit which has disorganized everything amongst us, gallantry, good manners, wit, amiability, politeness. It may seem a paradox, what I am going to say, but I do say that I am convinced that if, for the last thirty years, the French have always been dissatisfied with everything, always restless, always turbulent, it's because they always have either a pipe or a cigar in their mouths. It is tobacco which makes them mad or wicked. Let them give up smoking and they will become again what they were before, good and intelligent.

This will tell you, reader, what little use I make of tobacco. I have already mentioned one of my aversions, travelling ; tobacco is my second aversion, and dogs my third. This last aversion dates from my childhood. Whilst I was quite a child, I used to see my mother turn pale, when the smallest toy-ter-

rier came near her, barking, and having learned thus, as a child, to beware of the canine race, I continued, as I grew older, to keep it at as great a distance as possible from me. All things considered, however, I will say this, that if I was forced to choose between a journey of fifty leagues, the society of a smoker for a whole day, and the company of a dog for a month, it's the last I would choose, having learned, from experience, that if all dogs bark, they don't all bite, whilst, as far as I am concerned, all journeys are tiresome, and all smokers unbearable.

What I like, amongst animals.....

But I'll tell you that later on. At present, I must close this chapter.

The *fête* of The Shepherds of Syracuse at the Ile d'Amour had given me the idea for a comic opera, which pleased Adam immensely, and we frequently met to talk it over. But various circumstances separated us. Adam went off on a journey, if I remember rightly, and I was taken up with pressing work; in one word, *Les Bergers de Syracuse* remained an embryo. This did not prevent me, later, from applauding with all my force the first performance of Adam's first work, *Pierre et Catherine*, which was played at the Salle Feydeau, for its closing, in 1829.

For its definite closing. The hall was condemned, and it was closed for the last time in April 1829. It was not without regret that I saw its walls falling under the picks of the masons. No doubt the theatre

was an old one, it was mean and clumsy in construction ; its entrance, narrow and dark, was as dangerous for people on foot as it was inconvenient for carriages, but it was full of pleasant recollections for me. I had scored some triumphs there ; amongst others, besides those which I have mentioned, that of a piece in three acts, *Les Enfants de Maître Pierre*, with music by Kreubé, in which Ponchard, La Feuillade, and Mesdames Pradher and Rigaut acted. It seemed to me, as I watched its destruction, that it was less a public building which was being destroyed, for the public safety, than a friend of mine who was being sacrificed.

And is it not natural to attach oneself to things as to people, and if one weeps for a dead friend, may we not also weep for the house where one used to meet this friend ?

Hérold shared my opinion in this matter. One evening in the autumn of 1829, we were passing in front of the Salle Feydeau, of which nothing was left but a heap of rubbish.

"It was there," he said, "that my first two operas were played, my *Les Rosières*, and my *La Clochette*."

"It was there," said I, "that they played *our Muletter*."

"Ah, well," said Hérold, "I regret this theatre. One knows what one loses, one does not know what one is going to get."

Dear Hérold. He was fated not long to survive the Salle Feydeau. Less than four years later, in the

month of January 1833, he succumbed, in the flower of his youth, at the full of his fame, to a disease of the chest. I was present at the first performance of his *Le Pré aux Clercs*, his swan's song, and when I got home, after this triumphal evening, I awoke my wife, at one o'clock in the morning, by playing and singing one of the motives of this delicious play which had struck me the most, the soldiers' chorus in the third act :

"Nargue de la folie  
De tous ces gens de cœur!  
Ils vont jouer leur vie  
Pour un faux point d'honneur."

And some days later, the powerful head which had created these divine melodies was cold in death ; a few days more and I followed Hérold to his last resting place.

As for me, I went but rarely to the Opéra-Comique, which was moved in turn from the Rue Feydeau to the Place Ventadour, and then to the Place de la Bourse. The management of the theatre itself changed hands three or four times in a period of four or five years, and the company was in part renewed. I felt a stranger amongst all these new faces, and withdrew. From that time on, writing for the stage was for me only a recreation from my labours as a novelist. As soon as it became a cause of fatigue and worry, I preferred to give it up, rather than to fight against adverse circumstances.

And this is what I also did at the Vaudeville and the Palais-Royal, when the managers of these theatres, who had for a long time been in the habit of rushing into my arms as soon as they saw me from afar, appeared, later on, not to remember my name, when I bade them good-day. Oh ! theatrical managers are a very capricious race. But there is something stronger than caprice, and that is contempt. And when you are able to do so, that is to say, when you have other strings to your bow, it is, trust my word, a real delight to be able to turn your back, full and square, on disagreeable people.

## CHAPTER VIII

I dine at the Hôtel de Ville. — Comte de Chabrol. — Casimir Delavigne. — Inception of a 'gag.' — 'There's nothing there yet, we must get something put there.' — The Revolution of 1830. — The 'gag' goes on. — M. de Salvandy. — Alexandre Dumas, Gerard de Nerval, etc., etc. — Dupeuty takes it up. — My patrons in spite of myself refuse me their protection. — Decorations which begin at home. — A proof of the esteem in which Pope Gregory XVI deigned to hold me. — A mysterious call. — Do they want to make me a *carbonaro*? — They want to bestow a certain Italian order upon me. — My answer to this proposal. — Silent for thirty years. — The 'gag' comes on all the stronger. — The papers, under the Empire, on August 15th, and New Year's Day. — 'Good old Paul de Kock.' — My martyrdom. — A gentleman who frequents ghosts. — 'Your father is decorated.' — 'I did it.' — I ask to be made a Commander. — Lambert Thiboust's heartfelt cry. — The fox too ripe for the grapes. — The best of Republics. — There will never be any more fighting. — At the guardroom with Frederick Lemaître. — Sham patrols hinder the real patrols. — I spend an evening at Lafayette's house. — What I see there. — Enough of politics, let us talk of Romainville. — Abbotsford. — The Romainville woods as they were formerly. — *La Poule Russe* and its punch. — How a woman who vended Cashmere shawls became tender. — The *Tournebride*. — Robert or the *restaurateur* who illuminates.

— Rides on horseback. — I force my wife to take horse-exercise in spite of herself. — My repentance. — ‘I prefer that.’

I think I stated, higher up, that I have never received anything from any Government, nor from any other public authority. I made a mistake and do here rectify it. In 1829, I received from M. de Chabrol, Prefect of the Seine, an invitation to dine at the Hotel de Ville, an invitation, which I was servile enough to accept, even with certain pleasure. The Comte de Chabrol, who was a man of great merit,—as indeed he must have been, to have been left by the Restoration in a post which he occupied under the Empire—had a reputation for loving the arts and for protecting them. His asking me to his table—me, the popular novelist—was an acknowledgment that my works had some value. I am not conceited, but it pleases me all the same, now and again, at a time when I am often attacked, to meet somebody who shows me, by his acts, how little he cares for these attacks. I repeat it, it was with great pleasure that I accepted the Prefect’s invitation.

There were about forty guests at this table, painters, authors and musicians for the most part, and I was seated between Auber and Casimir Delavigne. I had long been on friendly terms with Auber, but Casimir Delavigne I only knew by sight. I paid him some compliments on his *Marino Faliero*, which had just been produced at the Porte-Saint-Martin, and this soon broke the ice. Casimir

Delavigne, whose talent is being denied to-day, as though to-day we possessed many poets of his standing, was very amiable and very simple as a man. Disliking official gatherings, and far preferring his family circle to society, he had only come to this banquet, at M. de Chabrol's pressing request. And, indeed, I could understand that a big dinner possessed few attractions for him, for, in obedience to the strict laws which his weak state of health imposed upon him, he ate nothing but vegetables and drank nothing but water.

"Poor Delavigne," said Auber, who like myself, was blessed with an excellent digestion, and is still so blessed, I should say, for whenever I meet him now-a-days, it is always in a provision shop, Potel et Chabot's, or Chevet's—"Poor Delavigne, it must be rather trying to you, to see all these succulent dishes, all these excellent wines passing before you, without being able to touch them."

"Oh, not at all," said the author of *L'Ecole des Vieillards*, laughing, "I look at you, my dear Auber, and you, M. Paul de Kock, and see you enjoying these dishes and these wines like true connoisseurs, and, as there is pleasure in admiration, I don't bore myself at all."

During the evening, the Comte de Chabrol addressed a few words to me in private. They were very flattering, but I do not think it necessary to repeat them here. What I will repeat, is something else that was then said to me by the Prefect of Char-

les X, which has stuck in my memory as the starting-point of a 'gag,' of which I have been the butt for the last forty years, and which, especially during the last few years, has greatly irritated me, although I am quite sure that such is not the intention of those who subject me to it and that, on the contrary, they think they are obliging me. Whenever I hear this gag, I feel like Ravel, if you remember him, in *Une Fièvre brulante*—how funny he was—when-ever he heard the sound of a piano. I feel that I could scream. If I don't howl like Ravel, it's because I dislike dogs and don't want to have anything in common with them.

I will explain. I have borne my martyrdom quite long enough as it is, without crying "Hold, enough!" and I could find no better opportunity for unbosom-ing myself, than in my Memoirs.

Well then, after dinner, the Prefect had walked up and down with me, in one of the drawing-rooms, chatting. Just as he was going to leave me, to at-tend to his other guests, he touched my buttonhole with his finger and said :

"There's nothing there yet. We must get some-thing put there one of these days."

This 'something' everybody can guess what it was, and I confess, with all humility, that the thought that this 'something' might be bestowed on me was in no wise shocking to my modesty. One usually draws comparisons under these circumstances. I saw men of letters being decorated every day, whose

equal I considered myself, and I did not consider myself, accordingly, unworthy of a favour which had been granted to them.

But if M. de Chabrol was sincere, and I am convinced that he was, if he really had it in mind to reward in my person a light, a very light author, such as I was, an author who never tried to fix the attention of his readers by skilful dramatic conceptions nor by effects of style, an author, who, although he had adopted as his motto these two words, "Laughter first," had never tried to justify this motto by sacrificing the things to which respect is due, Morality and Religion,—events occurred which prevented him from carrying out his kind intentions. The Revolution of 1830 broke out; M. de Chabrol retired and disappeared, and the bit of ribbon which, so to speak, he had offered me, never came to adorn my button-hole.

Under the reign of Louis Philippe, I won't say one hundred, but two hundred, three hundred people, each in turn, repeated M. de Chabrol's words to me, in varying formulas: "There's nothing there yet, we must get something put there." I may name M. de Salvandy, before he became a minister; M. de Salvandy, whose acquaintance I made in 1824, when he was trying his hand as a novelist, and who at that time condescended to address me as 'colleague'; Alexandre Dumas, who never once met me without saying: "Tell me the secret for writing a book like *Monsieur Dupont*, Paul de Kock!" Scribe,

Bayard, Mélesville, Méry, Gérard de Nerval, whom I had never seen, but who, meeting me one day at the theatre, nearly squeezed my hand off and said: "What, you're not decorated, Monsieur Paul de Kock. It's a shame. What can those duffers of ministers be thinking of?" Abel de Pujol, the painter; Gomis, the musician; David d'Angers, Dantan.....

I used to express my gratitude for all these offers of service, or expressions of regret, which were all the more gracious, that I had never solicited them; but when a man has been making himself hoarse, for over fifteen years, in returning thanks without ever receiving anything, it may be conceived that at times he feels somewhat irritated.

In 1839, a vaudevillist, who had often been my collaborator in dramatic work, and with whom I had, notably, written the play *Un de Plus* for the Vaudeville, Dupeuty by name, made me lose my temper in this connection. Dupeuty had often said to me: "It's a real shame that you are not decorated, Paul de Kock." One day he said to me in my study: "My dear friend, now speak the truth. You would not mind having the cross, would you?"

"Certainly not," said I. "If I could get it without having to ask for it."

"Humph! You see one must always ask for it."

"Well then, let's say no more about it."

"Oh, on the contrary, let's talk about it, since, if you will give me your permission, I will do for

you what you refuse to do yourself, and take the necessary steps. I have many friends in the Opposition, and I am quite certain that by getting two or three of them to put their shoulders to the wheel, I shall secure your nomination for you."

"My good Dupeuty, you are very kind, but if it is to cost you any trouble to....."

"Not at all. Simply give me permission to act as I think fit and—it's just now the time when the list is being drawn up for the New Year—and before a fortnight's out—you mark my words,—your name will be in the *Moniteur* amongst the new knights of the Legion of Honour."

"All right. So be it. Act as you think fit and accept my thanks in advance."

"Oh, you needn't thank me. It will please me, perhaps more than it will you, to see you with the cross."

A fortnight, three weeks, a month, two months passed, without bringing me any news of *my* cross. I often used to see Dupeuty, however, but he never referred to the subject. It is true that I never questioned him about it. At last one evening, thinking probably that he owed me at least an explanation, he said to me, with a face about a yard long:

"My friend, I am going to pain you..... but you know what it is about. I deeply regret to have to inform you that I have failed."

"Oh, indeed."

"Yes. The people I spoke to—three deputies of

the Left, who have but to speak, to get whatever they want,—have absolutely refused to support you. They do not deny your popularity, oh no ! but they said to me: 'Ask that Paul de Kock be decorated ! We ! Why, if we did that, the Ministerial papers would not have enough jibes to cast in our faces ! To expect Liberals to interest themselves in the author of *La Pucelle de Belleville* and of *Le Cocu*. We should be insulted, hooted at, abused ! If Paul de Kock wants the cross, let him apply to the King direct. We should not be surprised if he gave it to him. It is said that Louis Philippe is very fond of Paul de Kock, and that, from time to time, he sends a box of his books, together with some cases of first class Champagne, to Queen Victoria. Little presents keep up friendships. All that we can promise is that, out of friendship for you, we won't criticize his nomination too sharply in our newspapers, when Paul de Kock is appointed knight of the Legion of Honour.' "

I frowned. Dupeuty paused an instant. Then he continued :

"I was afraid of this. You are vexed by what I am telling you, Paul de Kock, but you must admit that it's not my fault, if..."

"I beg your pardon," I said, interrupting him rather coldly, "but it certainly is your fault, my good fellow, if on the pretext of rendering me a service which I did not ask of you, you have compromised my name and my character with individuals, whose

protection I personally should most certainly never have asked for."

"But—"

"But you'll never get your three Liberal deputies to believe that it was not I who begged you to put yourself under their wings, for my advantage, and it is that that vexes me, for I care nothing for the rest. The moral to be drawn from this affair, my dear Dupeuty, is, for you, that one should not oblige one's friends in spite of themselves, and, for me, that it is folly to allow oneself to be obliged by one's friends in spite of oneself.'

Excellent Dupeuty! In spite of all his efforts, he had been unable to get the cross for me, and, without too much difficulty, I fancy, he obtained it, not very long after, for himself. It is true that he was the author, in collaboration with a score of colleagues, of about fifty comedies and dramas, nearly all of which were imbued with Liberal ideas. Now Republicans have always been readily decorated by Monarchical governments. It is a way, if not of binding them, at least of preventing them from getting away. And a little strip of ribbon is not a costly affair.

Well, I was one of the first to congratulate Dupeuty, and upon my word, he gravely accepted my congratulations without moving a muscle. I could have wished, for his own sake, that he had laughed a little.

Here follows an adventure, which, whilst bearing upon the subject of which I am treating at present, refers to the promise I made, in chapter IV, to give a proof, both curious and unknown, of the kindly esteem with which Pope Gregory XVI deigned to honour my works.

It was in 1840, some months after the affair which I shall call, "The Dupeuty Affair ; or, Decorations, which begin at Home." I was working one afternoon when a caller was announced. The gentleman would not give his name. "Can it be a second Villeneuve ?" I wondered. But no, at first sight, I could have no suspicion that my visitor had anything in common with an actor, still less with a beggar. He was a man of about sixty, all in black, with black kid gloves, a man of serious and yet easy manners. His clean-shaven face was distinguished-looking and keen, and I set him down at once as a foreigner.

Indeed, at the first words which he spoke, I saw that I was not mistaken. He was an Italian.

"Sir," he began, "I am sorry to disturb you..."

"Not at all, sir. But might I ask..."

"Who I am? I will ask your permission not to tell you that—if I am to tell it to you at all—until I have told you what is the object of my visit. And I will explain to you why. I am charged to make you an offer, which you may accept, or which you may not like. Now, in the first case, it is obvious that I must tell you who I am, because the offer in question will be realized through me ; but in the second case,

the contrary will hold good. When you refuse a thing, it is hardly necessary to know who it is who has offered it. A refusal should suffice. Is not that so?"

"Quite right," said I, not a little astonished at the stranger's mysterious manners. What in the name of Heavens was he going to ask me to do? Did he want me to join some secret society, the *Carbonari*, or something of the sort?

He continued, smiling, as though he had guessed my vague state of anxiety.

"And in the first place, don't be frightened, sir. Politics have nothing to do with the object of my visit. We know that you are one of the few writers who are content to study life and to paint it, without pretending to reform society with your pen."

I breathed again.

"In two words, here is what brings me here," continued the mysterious gentleman. "You cannot be in ignorance of the fact—since the French papers have often repeated it, and it has never been denied by those concerned, which shows that it is true—that you are much liked at a certain Italian Court. Very much liked. The highest person in this court has all your works in his library, and he takes pleasure in reading them, for he finds them always amusing and never pernicious."

I bowed. Although I did not yet quite understand, I, at least, was beginning to see what was in the wind.

"Well," continued my visitor, "it's—well I won't say in the name, that would be saying too much—but with the assent, the consent of this Exalted Person, as a mark of his special esteem for your talent, that I come to offer you a knighthood in an order of which he is the supreme chief. An order which carries a name which is dear to every good Christian."

I bowed a second time.

"Do you accept?" asked the stranger.

"No, sir," I answered, "I refuse, but whilst refusing I beg you to rest assured of the gratitude with which your offer fills me."

"If the offer seems to you to merit your gratitude, why do you refuse it?"

"I might answer, in the first place, because I belong to the Reformed Church."

"Ah," said the Italian, suddenly becoming grave, "you are a Protestant?"

"Yes, sir. I belong to the same church as my father. But I do not put this reason forward, since, even were I a Catholic, I should still say, 'I am touched and honoured by your offer, but I cannot accept it.'"

"And you cannot accept it, because....."

"Because, in my opinion, when a man is not considered worthy of being decorated with the National Order by the government of his own country, he has no right to accept a foreign decoration."

My visitor, stretching out his hand to me, said :

"That reason is a decisive one, and it is also the only one which I shall give at home, where I am sure it will be justly appreciated. They will regret, as I am the first to regret, that the want of justice with which your books have been treated, by the authorities in your own country, force you to decline the rewards which may be offered to you elsewhere. And now, Monsieur Paul de Kock, our conversation having had no other result than to give me the pleasure of making your acquaintance, will it be too much, on my part, if I ask you to allow me to withdraw without telling you who I am, and further..."

"To keep to myself the recollection of this conversation. No sir. I promise it. I will tell nobody of your call. Nobody!"

I have kept my promise for thirty years. Am I wrong in breaking silence to-day? Let those who think so blame me; many others, I am sure, will absolve me, and agree with me, that with thirty years of discretion I have sufficiently kept my promise. And now I can hear the mockers crying out: "Yes, but what does your story prove, since you are unable to give any names? It proves that you were probably the victim of some practical joke, that your visitor was probably some humbug who would have been in an awkward fix if you had taken him seriously with his order 'dear to all good Christians.' A practical joke! To begin with, my Italian

did not look like a man of that sort, I vow it. And besides, practical jokes are only played on people who expose themselves to that sort of thing by their pretentiousness, their vanity, and I defy anybody to say that I have ever been pretentious or conceited.

Well, I have told this story, because I think that it ought to have a place in my Memoirs. Let people say what they like. It may be laughed at ; I am not frightened of its being denied.

#### To return to the gag !

During the first years of the present government, I was fairly well left in peace. Like his uncle, Napoleon III, during the first eight or ten years of his reign, had the bearing of a sovereign who does not allow his hand to be forced. He did not decorate me. If the friends of my buttonhole were good enough to groan—to groan because my buttonhole remained empty—at least they no longer bored me with their expressions of condolence. But the Emperor's hand relaxed,—I supposed it wearied him to remain always so stern—and, immediately, the said friends got on their hobby again, and on every side, on every pretext, I was once more persecuted with these two phrases : "What? You are not decorated, Paul de Kock. But they absolutely must decorate you?" And had this only happened amongst friends! But, in 1861 or 1862, on the occasion of the Emperor's fête-day, a journalist wrote an article on this subject. That was the signal. From that

day, no, never a New Year's Day, never an August 15th drew nigh, without one's reading in half-a-dozen newspapers: "Come, come, let us hope that this time, at last, Paul de Kock will get his decoration!" These heartfelt cries were usually embellished with some such comments as the following: "Our poor old Paul de Kock, who so amused our fathers, the very least that can be done for him is to give him this pleasure, before he descends into the grave—Our poor old Paul de Kock, he would be so pleased to have the cross—They say that he is heart-broken—poor old Paul de Kock—not to have the cross—He can't sleep at nights for thinking of it..."

All this, no doubt, is charming in tone, if as a statement of fact it is wanting somewhat in accuracy. Of course, when a man gets old, he knows the fact well enough. He knows it only too well. No need for anybody to tell it to him. But, leaving that aside, my journalist friends, if you could only know to what worries your kind expressions of sympathy expose me each year, you would think twice, in future, before continuing to overwhelm me. On each New Year's Day, in Paris, and on each August 15th, in Romainville, I have not a minute's peace. One letter, ten letters, twenty letters come in, one after the other, all couched in some such terms as the following:

"So you have got it at last, my dear Paul de Kock. Justice has been done to you. I hope that

I am the first to offer you my warm congratulations."

Then my friends call, hastening to shake hands with the "new knight..."

They come in...

"Well?"

"Well, what?"

"So it's done at last?"

"What's done?"

"But I read in last evening's paper, that you have got the cross."

All have read it, all. Their friendship willingly exaggerates facts. The newspaper had said that I was *perhaps* going to be decorated, and they had understood that I had been decorated. Why, only last year, I very nearly quarrelled with an old friend of my youth, because he found me, on August 15th, in my garden, without my "ribbon" in my coat.

"You are wrong, dear fellow," said he, very seriously. "As soon as one gets it, one ought to wear it."

"What ought one to wear?"

"Come, come. Is it because you have had to wait so long for it? Better late than never. Put it on, my friend, put it on at once, or else people will think you despise it."

Here is something still richer.

Four or five years ago, the evening before August 15th, as my son was entering the stalls of a theatre, he was seized by the arm by a gentleman who, as I am told, is in constant communication with ghosts

—a thing one would not imagine from his appearance.

"Well," said the gentleman to Henry. "You're pleased, I hope."

"At what?"

"What, you don't know it? Your father has been decorated. It will be gazetted in the *Moniteur* tomorrow."

"Oh, if that's true, I should be very pleased, as you say, but....."

"But it is true. The decree has been signed. And *I* ought to know. It was *I* who had his name put down on ——'s list."

He mentioned the name of a Minister. I do not repeat the name thus taken in vain by a stupid, practical joker.

However, as the gentleman who was a friend of the spooks was reputed to be on excellent terms also with certain persons in very high places—persons, whose dreams, no doubt, he interprets to them, as Joseph did to Pharaoh—my son grasped his hand and said :

"In that case, I have to thank you, both for my father and myself, my friend."

"Oh, there's no need to thank me, old fellow. It's long since I said to myself: 'Paul de Kock ought to be decorated.' Now he is. If I have helped it on a little, I have done nothing but my duty."

The next day, Henry came to Romainville, on purpose to tell me the news. I merely shrugged my

shoulders, because, more knowing than he, I saw at once that it was untrue.

"But that can't be so," cried my son. "Why should Z— have told me a lie?"

"Simply for the pleasure of lying, my boy. Nothing else. This gentleman wants to posture as a patron, and posture he did."

"And made a fool of me. It's a whim which may cost him a few cuffs."

"Bah. One doesn't get angry with humbugs. Give him tit for tat. When you next meet the gentleman to whom I owe my cross, tell him that I am very grateful to him, but that I am not quite satisfied, and that whilst he is about it, and as he has such influence with the Ministers, he might get me my nomination as Commander of the Order, for New Year's Day."

But enough on this subject. I do not want this gag to worry my readers as much as it has worried me. So I close with this declaration, which I beg the journalists who are good enough to interest themselves in my buttonhole, to take in earnest. I have never told a lie in my life, and I am not going to begin to tell lies at seventy-six.

I may have wished for the cross, like any other man. *I wish for it no longer.* I wish for it no longer, because, after having seen it bestowed, in turn, during the last forty years, on most of those who entered on the career of letters as my juniors,

if the cross were given to me to-day, it would be less a reward of which I could be proud, than a sop of comfort, and a useless one at that, because as I regret nothing, I don't want any comfort. In one word, I prefer people to say of me: "Why isn't he?" than that they should say what they say of So-and-So, or of What's-his-Name: "Why is he?" It is forty years now (I promised to speak out and I am doing so) since I ought to have been decorated. I am not decorated, and never shall be. So let nobody say anything more about it, even as I shall not say another word on the subject. It will oblige me greatly.

Three or four years ago, I met one evening, on the boulevard, Lambert Thiboust, a witty vaudevillist, with whom I wrote the piece *Une Maîtresse bien agréable* for the Variétés, a good fellow, whose sudden death distressed me greatly. As we were talking together, he said suddenly in a gust of effusion.

"My word, Monsieur Paul de Kock, I am speaking the truth. I should be ashamed to wear the cross, whilst you have not got it."

"Bah, my friend," said I, "don't be so scrupulous. Decorate your buttonhole, when you can, and don't trouble about mine. It'll do very well without the poppy-red."

"The grapes are too sour, Master Fox," exclaims, with a laugh, a journalist who wants to have the last word in this matter, but who shall not have it, for I make answer and say, without laughing:

"No, sir, it's not the grapes which are too sour for the fox, but it's the fox who is too mature for the grapes. His taste for grapes has passed, he has no longer any appetite for them."

Where did I leave off? As far as I remember, it was dining, in September, 1829, at the Hôtel de Ville, with M. de Chabrol, Prefect of the Seine, under the reign of King Charles X.

Well, some months later, on July 31st, 1830, King Charles X was in flight, M. de Chabrol was no longer Prefect of the Seine, and at one of the windows of the Hôtel de Ville, in front of which I found myself that day, with my friend Pâris, I saw the Duc d'Orléans, with General Lafayette on his right, and behind him, Laffite, Benjamin Constant and M. Viennet, waving a tricolor flag to the enthusiastic acclamations of the crowd.

Which meant to say, as Pâris, who was a deep politician at times, explained, that the Revolution was finished, well finished, and that we had every reason to rejoice, since the Duc d'Orléans had accepted the office of Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, which had been offered to him by the Chamber, and the kingdom was in consequence going to be happier than it had ever been under any government.

"So there will be no more fighting in the streets?" said I to Pâris.

"Of course not, there'll be no more fighting,

there will never be any more fighting. Charles X had become impossible, you can imagine it, my friend, with his reactionary ideas. His last decrees concerning the press and elections dealt him the last blow. He has been turned out, and it's a good thing. The Duc d'Orléans has been appointed Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom. In less than a week, he will be made king."

"Ah, you think that....."

"I am sure of it. Lafayette has said so. He sees in him the best of Republics."

"Oh, if Lafayette said so... As for me, all I ask is to be able, as soon as possible, to look out of my window without running the risk of getting a bullet in my head, and above all without having to look on whilst some poor wretch dies in front of my door, without daring to go down and succour him."

"It's over, I tell you, my dear Paul, it's all over. In less than a month all traces of these three terrible days will have been wiped out."

"Except, I suppose, in the hearts of those who have lost some one who was dear to them, a brother, a husband, a son."

"Oh ! But what do you want ? One can't make an omelette without breaking eggs."

"Yes, yes, that's a very nice proverb for people who like omelettes, but not so for the hens."

It had been with the greatest reluctance that I went to the Hôtel de Ville with Pâris. A mob fills me with terror. I find that even when it is joyous it

appears to be enraged. But when one has been shut up at home three days and three nights, one wants at any cost to walk, to get the air. And the fact is we had had a bad time of it, my wife, my children and I, in our apartment on the Boulevard Saint-Martin, during the days of 27th, 28th, and 29th of July, 1830. The Boulevard Saint-Martin was not then, as it is now, adorned, for half its length, (ought I to say, adorned?), with a sort of hollow *chaussée* fringed with heavy ramparts, but ran straight and level from the faubourg to the Ambigu, a most favourable field for cavalry charges. And so there had been a good deal of fighting on my poor boulevard. The old elms which shaded it had been stripped of their finest branches, and the shutters of all the houses looked like sieves.

But what a thing curiosity is to be sure. My wife and I both knew very well that in looking out through the shutters during the fighting we ran the risk of getting wounded, yet the temptation to look was irresistible, we wanted to look and we did look, reproaching each other with our imprudence our folly. A stupid folly, at the best. The sight of men mortally wounded, rolling in their blood, in the death agony, is an ugly one. The same sight was to be seen under my windows on the 24th of February, 1848, but, that time, I did not look on. I kept in the back-rooms with my daughters, waiting till the storm had passed, without the least wish to witness its furies.

Pâris, indeed, had made no mistake, and already on July 31st, posters were up at every street corner announcing that "Henceforward the Charter will be a fact," and the Parisians, in consequence, from lions that they were the day before, had become sheep. What did they want? That 'the Charter should henceforward be a fact.' This was promised, this was publicly posted up, so they buried their dead, and laughed as they bandaged their wounds.

However, as it is an averred fact that when the Parisians have once taken up a rifle they have the greatest reluctance to put it down again, a sort of National Guard had been organized throughout the whole town, for fear of an aggressive return of the Royal troops, and every good citizen's duty was to join it. I was a good citizen and so I became a National Guard. I was on duty four successive nights. Frederick Lemaître, who lived in the same house as I did, on the Boulevard Saint-Martin in 1830, belonged to my company. He must remember how one evening, when our corporal came in to the guard-room, looking very pale, and told us that something was expected to happen that night, that *sham* patrols had been sighted—that is to say, patrols composed of the enemy, of Swiss and gendarmes—and when, some minutes later, a *real* patrol was being sent out to reconnoitre, it was found that of the 25 men who had been there when the corporal came in, only seven were left. Gad! you know, it's not everybody, who cares to run risks.

And Frederick Lemaître will confess that, like myself, though we had both stood our ground, he made no objections when the commanding officer, having spoken in scathing terms of the conduct of the citizen-soldiers who had disappeared, ended his harangue by saying to the citizen-soldiers who remained :

"Well, gentlemen, since these cowards force us to it, hard as it is, as we cannot abandon the guard-room, there shall be no patrolling to-night, by true patrols. Paris will take care of herself without us."

Louis Philippe, styled 'the best of Republics,' was accordingly proclaimed king of the French on August 9th, and Pâris was not a little proud of having prophesied so truly.

"Now we are quiet," he said to me, "quiet for ever."

"Humph, for ever?" said I. "Are you quite sure?"

And I began to sing :

"Neither never, nor always,  
Is the motto of the French." \*

"I admit," said Pâris, "that the French are unstable. But what could they ever get better than what they have got now? A Constitutional King."

"I don't know what the French could get better, but I say again that I shall be very astonished, if some day they don't serve Louis-Philippe, just as

\* Ni jamais, ni toujours,  
C'est la devise des.... Français.

they have served Charles X, even to change for the worse."

"Bah, Lafayette is there, to keep the mob in order."

"Lafayette is no longer young."

"Bah. How old is he? Barely seventy-three. He has still ten years to live, and in ten years a Government has time to get itself firmly established."

Pâris was a great admirer of Lafayette, whom he always called the "Veteran of Liberty." In the winter of 1831 he insisted on taking me to one of the General's evening receptions. I had refused to go, saying that I had not been asked, a reasonable excuse enough.

"There is no need to be invited to go to Lafayette's house," said Pâris, "Lafayette receives all comers, and he is pleased to receive them."

"Even when he does not know them?"

"Why should he know the names of his visitors? Is he not certain that they are all his friends? Come, you must come with me, Paul de Kock."

"But what shall I look like, I, a novelist, at the house of your great politician?"

"You need not look like anything. Nobody will take any notice of you, and the General least of all. You will make him a bow, he will shake hands with you, and that's all. You will then stroll through his drawing-rooms and look about you, and when you have had enough of it, you will go away."

A public drawing-room of this sort offered indeed

a very tempting study. So I accompanied Pâris to General Lafayette's in the Rue d'Anjou-Saint-Honoré.

It was a Tuesday, the General's day of reception. It was not yet nine when we arrived, yet the drawing-rooms were already crammed with visitors. They were not all faultlessly dressed, oh, no ! I even noticed a great number of people who, if their means would not allow them to wear gloves, might at least have washed their hands before entering. But no doubt these gentlemen thought that dirt is a sign of Liberalism. Besides, Lafayette's apartment was so plain, both in decoration and in furniture, as to defy these democratic liberties. We saw the general, we bowed to him and, in accordance with the established programme, he gave us in return a warm shake of the hands, which for my part, touched me deeply. People may have made light of Lafayette, Mirabeau may have styled him Grandisson-Cromwell, and Napoleon may have called him a fool, yet he was by no means a nobody, this man who had been the friend of Washington, and who, although he had not often played a brilliant part in the events which took place in turn in France from 1789 on, had at least always acted as an honest man. And besides, he was a contemporary of my father ; perhaps he had known him ; perhaps this hand which pressed mine had formerly pressed a hand which I had never the joy of touching with my filial lips.

In a word, I did not regret my visit to Lafayette ;

the only thing I did deplore, was that for twenty notabilities, political and other, who were pointed out to me in his house, I had met so many nobodies of evil mien. Popularity is not all roses, and there must have been plenty of work for the brooms in the general's drawing-rooms, after those people had left.

But enough—reader, you agree with me?—on subjects which have a political odour. And so, to finish this first part of my Memoirs, to my liking and I hope, to yours also, I have a great wish to leave aside all other stories, and to tell you the story of that summer-residence of mine, which has been the delight of my heart for close upon forty years, and which is still so to-day, in spite of the alterations, for the most part ugly, which time and men have effected in the neighbourhood. Romainville—now called The Lilacs—Romainville is my Abbotsford, the Abbotsford of the popular novelist. Walter Scott had a castle, Paul de Kock has a little house. But who has been happier, at home, the owner of the little house, or the master of the big castle? Between ourselves, I would not put my money on Sir Walter Scott. For forty years, I have worked, free and contented, at Romainville; I have laughed there with my friends, I have also wept with them, when death suddenly robbed me of those dear ones whom one can never replace in life, my wife and my mother.

Well let us begin the story of Romainville. You

will find that it will not bore you. To begin with, I have already told you that my liking for that part of the country dated from my youth ; I have told you that when I was twenty years old, whenever I wanted to take a lady for an excursion on Sundays or holidays in the summer, it was to the Romainville woods that we used to go. And where, timing yourself by your watch, could you find a pleasanter hour's walk from Paris ? And, mark you, it was an excursion for which you could dispense with a carriage, which was not its least advantage. Arm in arm we used to walk up the faubourg du Temple and la Courtille ; we crossed Belleville, passed along the road of the Saint-Fargeau Park, leaving the telegraph to the right and the Prés-Saint-Gervais to the left, and there, directly in front of us, was the country, fields of rye and of wheat, divided off by bushes of red and black currants, where in autumn, we used to pause stealthily, shaded by plum-trees and nut-trees from which we used to pick some fruit on the sly. On the sly, for the rural guards were on the watch there, and these rural guards of Romainville were not too well disposed towards the Parisians. At last the woods were reached, and here on the border of the woods was an inn, a good village inn, such as there used to be in those days, clean and simple in appearance. It was called *A la Poule Russe*, and is still standing. You could get Bagnolet wine there, the wine called *picton*. It cost twopence the bottle, and made excellent punch. In 1812, I knew

a little artificial-flower maker who liked this little Bagnolet wine so much, that once she had taken her seat in the vine-covered arbours of *La Poule Russe*, it was impossible to get her away. On three separate occasions I wanted to take her to Romainville, and on each occasion we did not get beyond *La Poule Russe*. I was forced to give in.

Although the forest was not of very great extent, it was still big enough for anyone who did not know it to lose himself in. I knew it as well as the inside of my pocket, and so, when I did lose my way there with one of my conquests, it was only to draw advantage from her terror. When women are frightened they usually become very tender. I may be mistaken and it may be that places and things seem more charming in memory than they really were, but I will say that it seems to me that the Romainville woods were charming, far more charming than those in the neighbourhood of Paris, both in the varying conformations of the land and the wild picturesqueness of its trees. One thing is certain and that is that the avenues in it were not cut out in straight lines like those in the Bois de Boulogne or in the Bois de Vincennes. It was allowed to grow as it pleased, little wood for lovers and for artists as it was, without being clipped and pruned and trimmed.

And as one walked down towards Pantin, skirting Madame de Montesson's park, what an admirable view opened out before one's eyes. Paris and

the whole plain of St. Denis was stretched out before you, in a fairy-like panorama. Thanks to this panorama, in 1816, I got the first kiss from a charming mender of cashmere shawls. My love, the wine-punch, an excellent lunch at the gamekeeper's house and a walk under the trees, had not touched her heart; it was the magnificent view which tamed her.

"Ah, how beautiful," she cried.

"It's not as beautiful as you are," said I. And, you must admit, I could say nothing else.

She smiled. I picked this smile from her quivering lips. An hour later, she was calling me 'my dear Paul.'

I have mentioned an excellent luncheon at the gamekeeper's. Perhaps I have spoken rather too well of this meal, for, to tell the truth, that rascal of a gamekeeper, taking advantage of the fact, that in those days, there was no other house in the forest where one could get anything to eat, used to take very little pains in his cooking. Eggs and chops or chops and eggs, his bill-of-fare never varied. It was only in 1818, that a man called Robert, one of Cambacérès' former cooks, was found intelligent enough to open a restaurant in the forest of Romainville, a house at the sign of *Le Tournebride*, which soon became famous. Robert was a character as passionately devoted to his art as Vatel, and really cooked very well indeed. I had the pleasure of helping on his house by describing it in some of my novels, for

which he always remained very grateful to me. The day on which he heard that I was coming to live in the district, he "illuminated." By "illuminating," Robert meant getting drunk. It's an excellent thing, and Hippocrates, as we know, recommends it, to exceed now and again, but it's very bad when drunkenness becomes a habit. Robert ended by illuminating so often that at last he went out altogether, after having completely ruined his establishment. His successor, who was but an indifferent cook, merely vegetated. *Le Tournebide* disappeared. There is a private hospital in its place to-day. Its private rooms have been turned into sick-rooms, and people cough and spit and groan there where once one laughed, and sang and kissed. Poor *Tournebide*!

It was in 1818 also that people began to let out horses—seeing what sums were to be earned in this way—for excursions in the wood. This was another reason why I often went there. I had never taken riding-lessons and was, I admit, a very bad horseman, so bad, indeed, that I rarely got on horseback without alighting, at least once, head foremost. But one can never pay too dearly for a pleasure. I liked horse-exercise, and the fact that it did not like me did not trouble me. For more than ten years, I never let a week go by, without going for a gallop, with a friend or two, in the Romainville woods, or in the environs, Noisy-le-Sec, Montreuil, Ville-momble, Montfermeil. And, after I got married, I made my wife come out on horseback with me.

That was selfish on my part, you will say. Say it, if you please. But my wife never said it, not she. My good and darling Eliza. She would have accompanied me in a balloon, if I had wanted her, and without hesitation. One day, however, she fell off her horse in the wood, and her fall might have been a very bad one, and that made me reflect. If I had the right to run risks with myself, I had none to risk killing my wife. So that put a stop to her rides ; and as to myself, a cold bath which, together with one of my hired steeds, I had to take against my will in the pond at Bagnolet, cooled my equestrian ardour.

"We'll continue our excursions at Romainville," said I to Eliza, "but we will go on foot."

"I won't deny that I like that much better," she answered, again without hesitation.

## CHAPTER IX

House for sale. — “That won’t bind you.” — M. and Madame Cartery. — An inspection of the little house. — My wife has an answer to everything. — Five thousand francs and the expenses. — *Un de plus.* — Arnal rescues us. — We have “our home.” — My shrubs and my beds. — No drinking water. — My wife is frightened. — A nocturnal adventure. — The band of thieves. — I nearly commit a crime. — The Romainville ball. — Amédée de Beauplan. — Mademoiselle Plessy. — I shoot. — I shoot no more. — The Republic takes my guns. — How I worked on the grass. — The shawl. — *Latet anguis in herbâ.* — Recollections of my lawsuit. — M. de Vatisménil. — The other advocate. — My two brothers Henri and Jean-Pierre. — A Dutch General and a French Colonel. — Why it was a good thing that the Colonel retired. — United. — Madame Gaigneau wishes to be called Madame de Kock. — Count d’Orsay. — A letter from Bulwer-Lytton. — I don’t think any more of the lawsuit I lost. — My philosophy. — The animals I love. — Frontin, or the talking cat.

It was two years after the revolution of 1830, one day in the month of May. My wife and I were at Romainville. We had lunched—not at the *Tournebride* inn, for the *Tournebride* was dear if it was good, and, as we were not rich we were economical—at a small restaurant which had recently been opened on the Paris road, where one could get an excellent dish of sheep’s trotters in white sauce and

where there was a fine skittle-ground, and were just about to enter the wood, when passing in front of a small house on this road, which was close to Robert's place, our eyes fell simultaneously on a notice which was hanging to the shutter of a window, bearing this inscription: "For Sale."

"See here," said my wife, stopping, "this house is for sale."

"Well?"

"Well, you who are so fond of this spot. What can a little house like that be worth? Not much money, for certain."

"I don't know about that."

"Well, we can in any case look over it and ask the price. That won't bind us, just to look over it."

"That won't bind us, just to look over it." Women have arguments of their own. "That won't bind us." On the contrary that does just bind you, because ten times out of twelve, one wants to possess, what one has wanted to see.

But the cottage was so attractive, facing the South, with a garden in front. The garden was small also, about fifty paces long by forty broad. But that was quite enough for us. With a big garden, one must have a gardener, and we did not want a gardener. I should think not. It was we, we alone who would plant our flowers and water them. My wife could already see herself at it.

We knocked at the door of the cottage. An old peasant opened.

"What do you want?"

"Is not this house for sale? We should like to look at it."

"Oh. All right. Come in. I say, Françoise, here are some people come to look at the house."

"Well, show it them. What an ass you are, Cartery. Can't you see I'm washing. Do you think I'm going to bother about it?"

"But you know I've got to go to the field to hoe the potatoes."

"You'll hoe them afterwards. These people are not going to stay here all day. It's not the Louvre that you've got to show them."

M. and Mme. Cartery did not receive the people who came to look over the house for sale in a very amiable manner. Why? We soon learned the reason.

We went into the garden, where on the right, near the well, the woman was engaged on her interesting washing. She did not condescend even to look at us.

"May I ask you, sir," said I to the husband, "if this house is yours?"

He made a face.

"It was mine only three weeks ago," said he, "but, to-day, it's not mine any more."

"Oh, and why is it for sale, if you have already sold it?"

"I didn't sell it. It's the man who sold it to me, who has taken it back and wants to sell it again."

"How do you mean.—'Taken it back?'"

"Why, what I say. Because I didn't pay. This is what's up. Do you know M. Bernard?"

"Isn't he a former stockbroker who owns the Romainville forest?"

"That's right. Well, it's M. Bernard who had this house built and many more in this district. It's a business of his, to build houses which he sells at so much a year. Do you understand?"

"Oh, quite well."

"So that as long as you pay him, he doesn't bother, but if you stop paying him, oh, then it's another story. He chuckles you out like a bundle of dirty linen. And, unfortunately, you can do nothing, because you've signed a paper which proves that M. Bernard has the right to take back his house if you can't give the money agreed upon. Ah, if I hadn't signed!..."

"And what did you sign for, you idiot?" cried Madame Cartery from her washtub. "I told you not to sign."

"But if I hadn't signed, we shouldn't have had the house!..."

"Well, and since we haven't the house after you did sign! So I was quite right to tell you not to give your signature."

I now understood why the Carterys were in such a bad humour. They had been turned out for not paying, and so they cared very little whether this house, which did not belong to them any more,

found a purchaser or not. And however ready I might have been to pity them if their troubles had left them polite, if not honest, their rude tone and disagreeable manners inspired me with but little pity. So I asked no more questions and devoted my attention to the house, which I inspected with my wife. There was on the groundfloor a room which could be used as a parlour, also a dining-room, a kitchen and a cellarette, and upstairs two bed-rooms and three closets. And that was all.

"It's very small," said I to Eliza.

"Small, oh no. There's plenty of room to live in here. You take the room on the front for yourself. I'll take the room at the back."

"And the children?"

"Henry can sleep in a closet near you, and Caroline will sleep in my room."

"And the maid?"

"The maid in a closet, like Henry."

"But these closets have sloping roofs. They'll be stifled in there. You, yourself—your room has a sloping roof also."

"Bah, in the country. What's that matter?"

"Ah, so you think that it's more pleasant to be stifled in the country than in Paris?"

"No, what I mean is that there is more air in the country and that—consequently... Have you looked at your room, how pretty it is. There's a balcony to the window, and there's a splendid view from the balcony. You'll be able to inhale the scent of the

flowers there, before you go to bed."

"The dining-room is very poky."

"We'll dine in the drawing-room, when we have any guests."

"There's no cellar."

"But there's a cellarette."

"The well in the garden is very ugly."

"We'll hide it with creepers."

"Oh, you've an answer to every objection. Well, so you like this house. This cottage rather, for it's more a cottage than a house."

"I like it immensely. I should like to be in it already. Just think, how well you'll be able to work here. And how happy the children will be. To begin with, I'm quite certain that it will be a splendid thing for their health to pass the summer in the country. Ask the man the price."

I turned round to M. Carteret, who was waiting impatiently in the garden, for us to let him go off to his potatoes.

"Do you know the price of this house?"

"By gum, do I know it? It would be a queer thing if I didn't know, seeing as how I have paid a fifth of it. And I wouldn't so much mind if my thousand francs had been given back to me, when I was kicked out."

"A thousand francs. So they want five thousand francs for it?"

"Yes, five thousand. With the legal expenses, you can call it five thousand four hundred francs.

Oh, they're not giving it away."

"And if we made up our minds to buy .., whom should we have to see?"

"M. Bernard in Paris."

"Do you know his address?"

"No, I don't, but if you want it, all you've got to do is to ask next door, at the *Tournebride* inn. M. Robert is sure to know it, he is. When M. Bernard comes to Romainville, he always lunches at the *Tournebride*."

"Right! Thanks and goodbye."

We got M. Bernard's address. As we were returning to Paris, my wife and I talked of nothing but of *our* house. And the road seemed long to us both. For, in spite of all the objections I had made, I, too, was very much pleased with the little house. It was true that two hundred pounds—for I intended to pay ready money, having always had a horror of debts—two hundred and sixteen, or twenty pounds, including expenses, was a sum. But, for some time past, my novels and my plays had been bringing me in some money. I had been able to put by something with my *La Femme, le Mari et l'Amant* at the Nouveautés, and my *L'Homme de la nature et L'Homme policé* at the Variétés. And I had besides a big play in hand for 1832; a play taken from my novel *Le Cocu*, which I was to write in collaboration with Dupeuty. All that was troubling us was what to call the play, for we knew that the Censor would not allow us to use the title of the

novel. It was only at the last rehearsals that we found a title, or rather, to render to Cæsar what is Cæsar's, that Arnal, who played one of the principal parts in the play, found it for us.

"Call it *Un de Plus*," said he with a laugh. Neither Dupeuty nor I said anything, but we flung our arms round his neck. And it was well worth it. It was a real find, this title, which in three words, said all that was to be said.

But to return to *our* house, *our* house which really became *our* house in a fortnight from the day on which we had first visited it. Oh, there was no delay about it. In a fortnight, all legal formalities had been carried out, the Carterys had vacated the premises,—and we were free to take possession.

How quickly that first year of our life in "our home" at Romainville passed by. If it be true, according to the opinion of certain fanciful legists, that "property is a theft," it must be admitted that this kind of theft is very excusable because of the pleasure it gives those who are guilty of it. We furnished our house as simply as possible, for having already so taxed my purse, I could not and would not go to further expense. So it was I, myself, who, helped by my son, papered all the walls and stained all the floors. Whilst I was doing this, Eliza began to map out the garden.

"This must be a basket of flowers, next year," she said.

And she carried out what she had promised. The

next year, when the lilacs, the seringas, the rose-trees and the honeysuckle, which she had planted, were in bloom, and all the beds were full of flowers of every kind, people used to stop in the road to admire our garden.

It was I who watered the garden. I no longer found the well so ugly—it supplied me with the means of refreshing, to their fill, my beds and shrubberies. My beds and shrubberies, yes, but not myself nor mine. That was one of the drawbacks of the place at that time. There was no water to drink. Now-a-days, water-carriers bring water from the Seine at Belleville and deliver it every day at the houses in The Lilacs, but in 1832 and up to 1836, we were forced to fetch our supplies from a spring in the fields a good way off. Henry attended to this and did not grumble at it, because when he came back, bringing the water in a little barrel on a wheelbarrow, he used to rest, whenever he felt tired, and that was always when he was under some fruit-tree or near some field of raspberries or of strawberries.

When it was fine, we used to breakfast and dine in the garden, in an arbour which I had manufactured. In the evening we used to sit in front of our house and watch the people going by, just like the small shopkeepers in the Marais quarter of Paris. And the small shopkeepers of the Marais are not such fools; they do what it gives them pleasure to do. We often, also, used to go out for a walk at night in the wood or in the fields. Not too late, however, for

my wife was rather nervous. Indeed, when we first came to live in the country, she spent some sleepless nights at Romainville. The deep silence that prevailed frightened her. And then she found that the walls round our garden were not high enough to keep thieves out. I had bought a gun so as to reassure her. One night she came, all trembling, into my room.

"My dear."

"What's the matter?"

"Robbers! I assure you there are robbers."

"In the house?"

"No, in the lane opposite my window, on the other side of M. Nonclair's house." (M. Nonclair, a man of private means, was our neighbour on the left, and Robert, the restaurant-keeper, was our neighbour on the right.) "I have heard them walking about, there are at least seven or eight of them. I am sure they are getting ready to climb over our walls."

It seemed to me very surprising that a gang of burglars should be making ready—in such an open manner (for had not my wife heard them walking about?)—to break into my neighbour's house. However, I got up and, carrying my gun, followed Eliza to her window. It was a dark night. No moon, no stars. We listened, with straining ears, for ten minutes. Nothing.

"You have made a mistake," said I.

"Oh, no, I am sure I have not. Listen. Ah, do you hear now?"

And the fact was, I did hear a low murmur of voices. The voices of men whispering.

"Fire a shot," said my wife.

"But..."

"But they'll see that we are on the look-out, and will clear off. I beg you, my friend, fire, fire."

I fired.

Directly afterwards, there was the loud noise of steps hurrying down the lane, like the steps of frightened folk running wildly in every direction. To be sure, I must have terrified the gang.

"They're running away," said my wife.

"I don't know if they're running away, but, at any rate, they don't seem to be running very far. They are stopping in the lane."

"Perhaps you have wounded one of them. The leader of the gang, perhaps."

"I should be very much surprised, if that were so, for I shot in the air."

Suddenly the burglars seemed to quiet down. They stopped running. At the same time a loud voice cried out.

"Who was it who fired?"

"Don't answer," said Eliza.

"Yes, I must," said I. "I seem to know that voice."

Then, aloud :

"It's I who fired," said I.

"Who? I? You! M. Paul?" (They used to call me M. Paul at Romainville).

"Yes, I, I, M. Paul."

"And why did you fire?"

"Because, because—in the dark, my wife thought, and I thought..... So you're not burglars?"

"Burglars! What a joke. Why we're National Guards watching over the safety of the village."

National Guards! Deplorable mistake. I had fired at the patrol, or rather, and fortunately so, over the heads of the patrol, for, counting the killed and wounded, there was nobody killed at all in this terrible adventure. It only cost me a few bottles of wine with which next day I treated the National Guards—peasants, neighbours of ours, for the most part people from whom we bought our milk and our vegetables. The wine was in compensation for the shock I had given them with my gunshot.

For the rest, from that night on, my wife slept more peacefully, quieted by the thought that she had no longer to fear burglars, since the rural National Guards were watching over our homes.

On Sundays, we used to go and watch the peasants dancing at the Romainville forest ball, and when friends were with us, we used to join in the rustic quadrilles. The ball-room, situated opposite the gamekeeper's cottage, was nothing more nor less than a big open place, with a cemented floor, under the shadow of oaks and chestnut trees. The orchestra consisted of a violin, a violincello and a trombone. For seats, there were wooden benches. The lighting consisted of a dozen lanterns hung on the

branches of the trees. Well, I assure you that the Romainville ball was very amusing, very amusing indeed, because of the queer 'mugs' and also the pretty faces that one saw there. And then, in those days the peasants round Paris were not nasty and rude as almost all of them are now-a-days ; their 'backs did not get up' when they met with *bourgeois*, and if one of us bumped up against them in dancing, they did not shake their fists and call us *aristos*.

Amédée de Beauplan, who owned a charming villa in the forest, about two stone's-throws from my cottage, near Madame de Montesson's \* former château, used often to come, with his wife and son, to watch the Romainville and Bagnolet lads and lasses dance. Amédée de Beauplan was a clever man and a good fellow. He was a composer of light music and has left behind him a number of tunes which, in my opinion, are worth a good many grand opera tunes. His *Dormez, dormez, chères amours* is a delicious melody ; his *Père Trinquefort* is a small gem. I had made his acquaintance in Paris, in society ; we became more intimate at Romainville. His wit was perhaps rather biting, but at least it was original. I have spent many pleasant hours, of an evening, listening to him as he sang to me, accompanying himself on the piano, the song or ditty which he had composed during the day. It was at

\* The Marquise de Montesson, whom the Duc d'Orléans, grandson of the Regent had, as it was said, married secretly, had caused this château to be built during the Empire, on the spot where to day rises the fortress of Romainville. (P. de K.)

his house that I had the pleasure of meeting for the first time, an actress, Mademoiselle Plessy, who was a mere child at that time, but who was soon to win a great reputation. That was in 1834. How old was Mlle. Plessy in 1834? I do not remember, and even if I did remember it, I should not say what it was; for it is only men who do not like women who know their ages. All that I can say is, that she was very pretty. She often used to spend two or three days with M. and Mme. de Beauplan. One morning when I was shooting over the wood, I suddenly met the young artist at the corner of a path and I declare that I thought that she was a hamadryad. The comparison is a queer one, but it is quite true. Does Madame Plessy-Arnould remember this meeting of ours? Does she remember that, like a courteous sportsman and a friendly neighbour, I offered her for her luncheon-table, six sparrows which I had just shot? No, no doubt. She has forgotten this trivial, this very trivial incident in her life. I have not forgotten it, and I don't deny, now that I think of it, that I wish I was back in the wood of Romainville, in 1834, saying to Sylvania Plessy, my hamadryad:

"Mademoiselle, will you accept my bag, six humble sparrows? A man shoots what he can and where he can. M. Scribe would offer you partridges. I offer you sparrows."

For, during the second year of my stay at Romainville, I had begun to shoot. M. Bernard, who

owned the wood, had given me permission to shoot and hunt over all his estate, and I took an evil advantage of his permission, and so did my son, to massacre sparrows, finches and such small fry. As a matter of fact there was no other game to be had, and so we could massacre nothing else.

"You would have done better," say you, "to have killed nothing at all." Well, that is just what we said to ourselves in the end. One day we got ashamed of killing the little birds who sang so prettily and who were so tough and so tasteless after they had been fried. So we laid down our guns. After the insurrection of June, under the second Republic, when, as a precautionary measure, the Government summoned all good citizens to take their arms, no matter what they might be, to certain *dépôts* which were designated, I sent my gun and my son's gun—a small child's one-barrelled gun—to the mayor's office at Belleville. It was understood that they were to be given back. I can only say that I never saw them again. Republics certainly do keep all that they lay their hands upon.

Thus I gardened, I shot, I took walks, I danced and I paid calls at my country 'seat,' but I also worked. Pleasure has never interfered with my work. During the months of May and June, I used to work at home in my room. Sometimes a good deal of noise was made below, in the parlour or in the garden, but noise has never prevented me from

writing. People can talk, laugh, and even sing in the room next to my study ; that has never stopped the flow of my thoughts.

When the weather was very hot, I used to turn the wood into my study. My wife had kept for me a large old linen shawl, for which she had no further use, for this purpose. I used to spread the shawl out on the grass, to keep off the damp, and then, stretched out full length upon it, face downwards, I used to write for three or four hours together, without any fatigue.

A disagreeable experience, however, put a stop to this method of working. One afternoon as, with my shawl spread out upon the grass, and I upon the shawl, according to my wont, I began to write, an odour... which had not the slightest analogy with that of lily of the valley, violently assailed my olfactory organs, and counselled me to betake my camp elsewhere. I hasten then to get up, and, with my shawl in one hand, and my manuscript and inkpot in the other, I search for a spot untainted by the tracks of tormented overtaken travellers... Under the hazel-trees? Yes, the grass is tender and close, a very velvet lawn ! Here I shall be as comfortable as a king. Again I spread out my shawl, and again I stretch out myself upon it. Hum ! Hum ! Fate is unkind to me to-day. The same... yes, the very same odour of a moment ago ! Gad, the wood, it seems, has had to-day the visits of many a tormented traveller. Let's go still further afield. In this glade !

Yes, here at all events, I have nothing to fear. Not a shadow of a trace of anything that's nasty here.

Third attempt, and yet the same result! It's enough to make a man despair. I determine to go in and work at home.

Alas! In my own garden, indoors, I find myself pursued by this same odour *sui generis* which had driven me from the wood. Whence came it! Ah, whence came it!... You have, doubtless, divined the end of the story. Well, yes, it was the shawl, it was in the shawl itself!... In carrying about my poor old shawl—which I had been careless enough to spread out on the very spot where I ought not to have spread it—I was carrying both the cause of the odour, and its effect. Horrible cause! Ghastly effect.

I laughed afterwards about it, and I hope, however realistic you may find this tale, that you will laugh also; but, from that moment, I gave up working in the grass in the wood. Experience had dearly taught me that if *latet anguis in herbâ*, there is something more repugnant still than a serpent that grass is capable of concealing.

My friends used often to come and see me at Romainville; they came still oftener after an action which I brought against one of my publishers, an action which I lost, and which not only upset my modest treasury, but which, during the two years through which it dragged, was also an unceasing cause of sadness and discouragement. Oh! those

two years. Even to-day, when I think of them, I shudder. I see once more all those legal gentlemen whom I had to meet every day about my ‘case,’ and my advocate also—a man of great merit no doubt (it was M. de Vatisménil, formerly Minister of Education under Charles X)—who had so cold, so severe, a countenance. And my solicitor, who was always so busy, that when I wanted ten minutes’ conversation with him, I had to wait two hours. And my business man, an ex-notary from the country, who had been commissioned by one of my friends to advise me, to pilot me over the ocean of litigation, and who was a good pilot only after a copious luncheon. Which meant, that at least twice a week, I had to stuff him with beefsteaks and claret. I see the Palais de Justice once more. Does not its very name chill the sturdiest heart? The lobby, where litigants walk up and down like souls in torment. The court-room, with its judges, with their heads in their hands, as though they were asleep, and the presiding judge, with his head against the back of his seat, as though he were dreaming. I see “the other side,” once more. Yesterday, “the other side” was calling me “his dear Paul de Kock ;” to-day he looks at me in a sarcastic and threatening manner. I hear his advocate. What! this is a purely civil lawsuit, so why does his advocate, in the pleading against me, load me with insults? “Paul de Kock. Bah. Who, after all is Paul de Kock?—A petty scribbler for the mob, whose talent is every day called into question and

not without reason. And as for the man—”

What, sir, you are not satisfied with attacking me,—though I do not understand why you should attack me, since it is my work that has enriched your client, since it is my work that you claim in his name, as your property—you are not satisfied, I say, with saying and repeating over and over again that my work is worse than commonplace, but you must also turn me into ridicule, and abuse me and insult me as a man. Yes! And, I, sitting in my place, have to listen to these insults, this abuse without saying a word. If I were to retort, my hostile advocate would order me to hold my tongue. He has the right to be insolent and a liar, and I have no right to cry out to him: “You are a scoundrel!”

Well, I did not want to think of all that, why have I remembered it? To shudder, as I did formerly, with indignation and with rage!... Let me calm myself. It is now close upon forty years, since this unlucky lawsuit took place, let us forget the wounds it inflicted, long since cicatrized, and let us only think of the friends who helped me to bind up these wounds.

My brothers, Henri and Jean Pierre de Kock, to begin with. And here—there will never be a better one—is an opportunity for me to keep my promise and to speak, with particulars, about my two brothers on my father's side. I take it readily. It will comfort me to have to tell you of these good and noble fellows.

I told you, in Chapter IV of this book, that, on their return to Holland in 1795, Henri and Jean-Pierre had been adopted, as its children, by the Batavian Republic.

From 1795 on, Henri was employed at the Ministry of War of Holland ; in 1797, he went with the ambassador Van Grasweld to the Congress of Rastadt, and soon afterwards went with him as second secretary to the Cisalpine Republic ; but, during their journey there, this Republic practically ceased to exist, and Henri remained in Paris, attached to the Embassy under Schimmelpenninck. On his return to Holland, he became the confidential secretary of Admiral de Winter, with whom he undertook a diplomatic journey in the Mediterranean and visited Tunis, Tripoli, Algiers, Malaga and Lisbon. In 1804, he was appointed colonel, chief of Admiral Verhuel's staff, and fiscal of the little fleet which was sent, under English fire, from Flushing to Ostend, where an army was encamped under the orders of Marshal Davoust. In 1806, he left for Java with Grasweld, whom the great Pensioner Schimmelpenninck had appointed Governor-General of the Dutch possessions in the East Indies ; but in consequence of the accession of King Louis Bonaparte to the Dutch throne, Governor Van Grasveld, who had got no further than Philadelphia, was recalled with his staff, and General Daendels was appointed Governor-General of the Dutch Indies in his place. De Kock, who had been charged with a special mission,

and whose name was not mentioned in the order of recall, thought it his duty to continue the long and dangerous journey alone, and travelled under false names and qualities, to escape the English cruisers. However, when he arrived in Batavia, he found that his dismissal had preceded him. The ex-governor Wisse, who was still on duty, appointed him his chief of the staff and allowed him to keep his rank as colonel. Daendels soon arrived ; he knew de Kock and had been friends with his father, and he allowed him to keep his rank and his place. He took part in an expedition against a province, the chief of which had revolted. In 1810 Jansens took Daendels' place. In 1811, the colony was seized by the English, who sent the Governor and de Kock, chief of the staff, to England, where they remained prisoners till 1814.

At this date, de Kock returned to Holland and fought in the 1815 campaign as a general in the service of King William I. He afterwards returned to the Dutch Indies, where he was appointed lieutenant-general, and lieutenant-governor-general under Van Der Capelle, the Governor-General. He commanded the land and sea forces, and in 1821, he dethroned and made prisoner the Sultan of Palembang, against whom two unsuccessful expeditions had previously been sent. In the end he established peace in the country.

He was recalled in 1830 by the king of Holland, who promised to appoint him Governor-General, and to arrange with him for the re-organization of Java.

but the outbreak of the war with France caused him to be appointed commander of Zealand. He established his headquarters in Flushing and remained there till 1837. He was then created Minister of the Interior and Grand Chancellor of the two royal orders of the Netherlands. Shortly after the abdication of William I, he retired from the Ministry with the title of Baron and the rank of Grand Officer of the royal orders, the Netherlands Lion, and the William.

He had twelve children, several of whom hold high places in Holland to-day.

Jean-Pierre, my second brother, was appointed sub-lieutenant in the Dutch army in 1795, became a lieutenant in 1799 and captain in King Louis Bonaparte's Royal Guard in 1806. He fought in the 1812, 1813 and 1814 campaigns, attached himself definitely to the French service under the Restoration, having naturalized himself a Frenchman, and retired in 1831, as Colonel of the 31st Infantry.

My brothers, as has been seen, had both made their way, in different military careers. And the difference between the flags under which they served might have proved fatal to them, for, as a result of political events, had the colonel not retired after the 1830 Revolution, his duty as a French soldier might perhaps have forced him to march against his elder brother and his mother-country. I have also told you, that as long as they lived, I remained on affectionate term with my brothers. It is true that

after 1831, it was only Jean-Pierre that I often saw. He was living in Versailles with his wife and children and used often to come and see me in Paris. As to Henri, our intercourse was limited, up to 1836, to an exchange of letters.

Well, in July, 1836, I had the joy of embracing both Jean-Pierre and Henri, on the same day, at Romainville. I had written to Henri some weeks previously to tell him of the unfortunate issue of my lawsuit, and he came in person to offer me his consolations and his purse. It was the first time that we had met together again since 1793, and we did not tire of looking at each other and of embracing. My mother, who was, of course, present at this interview, shed tears. The General, it appeared, was very like our father. "It's he," she kept saying, "it's Conrad de Kock in the flesh." Ah, I must mention here that after the death of M. Gaigneau, my mother had insisted on resuming the name of de Kock. She had perhaps no strict legal right to do so, but——

"M. Gaigneau," said she, "exists no longer, there is no more Madame Gaigneau. I prefer to be Madame de Kock. I regret that I did not always remain Madame de Kock, so I now become Madame de Kock once more."

What could one say to that?

Besides my brothers, I may mention amongst those who hastened to offer me their assistance, knowing me to be badly hit, Count d'Orsay, an ami-

able English gentleman, with whom, for some years past, I had been on terms of courteous intercourse. I thanked the Count. With the help of my brothers, I was in a position to pay over to my victorious enemy the sum which Dame Justice had condemned me to pay, as damages for the injury—which he had caused me. Before we parted, Count d'Orsay asked me to write a few lines to Bulwer-Lytton, the celebrated English novelist, promising to convey the letter to him with his own hands. "Bulwer-Lytton," said Count d'Orsay, "has the greatest admiration for your books."

I wrote to Bulwer. A week later, I received the following letter :

"Albany, London.  
"Oct. 20th, 1836.

"Dear Sir,

"Permit me to express my sense of the honor you have done me in the letter I have received thro' the friendly offices of Count d'Orsay. I am charmed to find that my long cherished view of the true tendency of your writings is supported by your own aims and ends. Perhaps, for it is well to speak frankly, I may regret that the irresistible dictate of a rich and unrivalled humour should sometimes have pursued a moral end thro' means easily mistaken by the herd, and still more, that your views of that morality which relates to the sexes, should be essentially different from those common in this country—where

it is outward morality that is rigidly inculcated. I mention this not from the presumption of reproach, but because I have found some difficulty in clearing the way to a just appreciation of your lofty merits, the beautiful goodness of heart and the profound and often magic philosophy that forms the under current of a comic stream more racy and powerful than that of any other writer I am aware of. In the *Edinburgh Review* of January next, I trust to embody my views of your genius in a manner that I trust will be agreeable to you. Whatever qualification may occur will arise not from myself but the scruples of the editor. But I trust to render such qualification unnecessary.

"I scarcely know how to condole with you on your losses. Genius is given to man as a compensation for a thousand evils and afflictions, that seem almost invariably to accompany it. And your genius takes so bright and benignant a view of life that I trust it is but the reflection of a joyous temper and an all-sufficing heart.

"Pardon me for addressing you in English. I am not sufficiently acquainted with your own language to trust to my knowledge of it for the expression of my enthusiastic admiration and profound respect.

"I am, my dear sir,

"Your most obliged and devoted Servt.

"E. Lytton-Bulwer."

Bulwer was right. I am unable, I do not know

how to be sad for any length of time. After the lapse of a few weeks, I had forgotten all about the action I had lost. I had sought after fortune, and that under outside pressure, for, as for myself, I had not the slightest ambition. Two hundred and forty pounds a year in my old age, and to be able to work up to my last hour, was all that I wanted. I had counted on large profits, realized in a literary speculation which I thought I had every right to patronize, and, on the contrary, it turned out that another had a better right than I, so that to punish me for having made a mistake I was stripped of a part of what I possessed. Well, there remained to me courage, health and youth—for I was still young in 1836—there remained to me those whom I loved and who loved me, my wife, my mother, my children and my brothers, there remained to me my pen, my little apartment on the boulevard Saint-Martin, my little house at Romainville, my cat... Don't laugh at me. Amongst animals, it is cats that I am fond of. And why not? You say that cats are ungrateful, selfish, capricious animals, which have no affection for their masters but only for the houses where they live. Those are old stereotypes, worth only their price as old metal. I maintain that cats are as capable of affection as dogs, and are superior to dogs in gaiety, intelligence and gracefulness. I have owned cats which I would not have sold for their weight in gold ; especially one called Frontin, who lived from 1830 to 1841. Frontin was no cat, in goodness of heart

he was a poodle, in sobriety a camel, in intelligence a monkey. He used to follow me in the summer when I took my walks in the woods of Romainville. In the winter he never left my study. Curled up all day long on a cushion near my writing-table, he slept as long as I was working—or pretended to sleep so as not to disturb me, but as soon as I rose, he used also to get up, arching his back and fixing his yellow eyes on me, as if to say: “Now we can have a chat, can’t we?” And indeed we used to chat. I petted him and talked to him and he used to answer me. He had different mews for each thing; to ask for food, for drink, for permission to go out, for leave to jump on my knees, or to lick my hand, to wish me good-morning, in my bed, and good-evening at nights.

Well, I have shown you that I am a philosopher, and I am not aware that a philosopher is forbidden to draw his contempt for adversity even from the affection of cats.

But I have written enough about my Abbotsford-Romainville Number 1. We will now, if you please, pass on to my Romainville-Abbotsford Number 2.

## CHAPTER X

A man is never satisfied. — “Raise your roof.” — The house of my dreams. — And there is a billiard-table. — We enter upon my Abbotsford, Number 2. — The advantage of having a hair-merchant as a tenant. — Why I wear a moustache. — Sudden catastrophe. — My wife’s death. — A word about Caroline and Henry, my children. — The story about Victor Hugo and the 4500 quarts of rum. — Joy once more at Romainville. — I buy a wood. — My theatre. — What used to be played there and how it was played. — The play, a ball and supper. — My usual guests at Romainville. — Charles Monselet comes too late. — Old age and the gout.

For it is quite true that a man is never satisfied, and that, indifferent to the wisdom of the proverb, when one is well off, one wants to be better off.

We had spent ten happy summers in my cottage at Romainville, when I began to wish to own a real house and a real garden. And I dared to state just now that I was not an ambitious man. In justification I will say, that, as a matter of fact, as time went on, my country house became too small for us all. My children had grown up, my son was a man, my daughter was a young lady ; and really, if as little children I had been able to make them sleep, during six months in the year, for want of room, in closets where they knocked their heads against the ceiling, I could not continue to do so, now that they were grown up, without acting as an unnatural father.

"If you wish me to love the paternal roof," Henry used to say to me, "raise it a metre." And he was quite in the right.

Now, it happened, that there was quite close to my little cottage, a house which its owner, a dealer in Rouen goods, called Salmon, wanted to sell, in 1842. It was the house of my dreams, placed between two gardens, in each of which my little plot of ground could have danced a saraband. And there were gardens planted with ornamental trees, and fruit-trees, and vines in full bearing. In one was an arbour, in which forty people could dine comfortably; in the other was a lawn where a company of national guards could have manoeuvred with perfect ease. And there was a rustic kiosk in one of the gardens! And two entrances, one on the South side, opening in the avenue of the chateau, and the other on the North, opening on to the Pantin road. And the house! There were four bedrooms, a drawing-room, a dining-room, a study, a bathroom, kitchen, pantry, billiard-room—a billiard-room. I was to have the billiard-table, if I bought the billiard-room. Now I am very fond of billiards. Between ourselves, I am fond of all games, but I have already told you of my tastes in this respect.

I abbreviate. The price which M. Salmon asked for his house was not excessive. I paid him the sum and, in May 1842, we took possession of our new domain, my Abbotsford, Number 2. I kept on my

number one, however. It would have grieved me to part with this little house. So I let it. It was recently tenanted by a dealer in hair, and this was very convenient when I wished to renew mine. For I won't hide the fact, that for a long time past, I have been wearing what the French actors call a "head-warmer," a wig. Nature had given me hair; time and work, I suppose, also have taken it away; and so, not out of coquetry, but so as to avoid chronic colds in the head, like father Ducantal in *Les Saltimbanques*, I have repaired as far as possible, time's outrages and labour's wounds. And whilst I am making these confessions, I may as well explain why, at sixty years of age, I began to wear a moustache, an ornament (if ornament it be), which till then I had always despised. Ah, well, it's only another dodge to hide the disagreeable work of Time. I have no more teeth, and a moustache, covering the upper lip, prevents people from seeing that the upper lip covers nothing. The only consequence is that my friends say that I look like an old general. I don't mind such a comparison in the least, It's not everybody who can be an old general.

I am joking, and I almost blame myself for this levity, when the progress of my story is about to oblige me to recall the memory of one of my greatest griefs, the death of my wife. Oh, I loved her well, my Eliza. I loved her—not as I see so many men pretending to love the partners of their choice,

with words and phrases. On the contrary, I loved her without telling her so, and I had no need to tell her that my heart was hers, that her happiness was my delight, to assure her that these things were so. Who was she? When had I married her? That is no business of yours, I am not in a confessional here, I am relating my memories. A thing of which I can assure you, is that she was of women the most honourable and the most worthy and that I married her because I adored her. She had spent many an evil day with me, without complaining; winter days, when we had no fire because we had no money with which to buy wood; summer days, when we took the air at our window because she had no bonnet, or no dress to walk out in. Often, I must admit it, I had given her cause for sorrow, for she was jealous, and had often reason to be so—but even then it was in secret that she used to weep, and when I reproached her—for I used to reproach her—for having red eyes,—she would quickly try to smile, saying: “But you are mistaken. If my eyes are red, it’s perhaps because I have been too long at work.”

And the fact is that at times she used to work very hard—and that it was necessary that she should do so.

And it was just when life was beginning to smile on her, just when she was calm and happy in the present and the future, that death took her while still quite young. She was forty years of age. Oh, it

seemed as if a secret presentiment of her approaching end struck her on the very first day that we entered our new home.

She was walking in the garden.

"Are you pleased?" said I.

She made no answer, but stooped to pick a flower.

"Do you hear?" I asked. "Are you pleased with your big house?"

She turned her face towards me. A tear was on her cheek.

"Do not scold me," she murmured. "Don't be angry."

"But—"

"But I am a silly woman. There! *I loved the little house better.*"

It was September 22nd, 1842. I had gone to Paris after dinner, to keep a business-appointment, and as it happened that on the next day but one, there was to be given the first performance of a play taken from Eugène Sue's novel *Mathilde*, at the Porte-Saint-Martin Theatre, I had arranged to go and ask the brothers Cogniard, the managers, for seats.

I had, however, intended to return to sleep at Romainville, as Eliza was not feeling very well that day and had complained of pains in her head. But it was she, herself, who had opposed my wish.

"No, no," she said to me, "you may perhaps be kept late at the Porte-Saint-Martin getting places,

and I don't want you to come back here after ten o'clock at night. There are often bad characters about at night on the road. So you had better come home to-morrow."

"But you are not well. Supposing you get worse in the night?"

"Oh, no fear of that. I had a head-ache ; it's over now, so don't be afraid."

"So don't be afraid." And that night, towards midnight, the poor woman, dragging herself as best she could from her room to her daughter's chamber, woke her up saying : "Quick, quick, Caroline ! I think that I am going to die."

Caroline was at that time barely twelve years old. Imagine this unhappy child, with only a servant to help her, for by a cruel fatality, Henry also was away from Romainville that night, imagine the poor little girl on her knees by the side of the bed on which her mother is dying of a congestion of the brain, hearing her repeat, with a voice ever more stifled : "I am dying. And, oh, oh, my God, your father and your brother are away."

I was fetched, at two o'clock in the morning, in Paris, by a good fellow of a workman, who had been dispatched by the servant, and who ran all the way. I could not believe in the extent of my misfortune. Can a man believe that those whom he loves *can* die? Those one loves seem to be one's self—one feels so strong, why should one despair. And yet how long that nocturnal cab-

drive from the Boulevard Saint-Martin down to there seemed to me. I had given gold to the driver, but I had not been able to give him a good horse. I arrive at last—I rush in. Ah, that face that, but a few hours ago, I had seen smiling, was like marble like the face of a statue representing the last and fearful expression of a terrible anguish. Those lips which till now had pressed mine—were icy cold. Those eyes which ever told me 'I love you'—were without expression. Yes, they had an expression, a terrible expression, the look of the dead. A look which those who have seen it never forget, a look which seems to say: "I have no more tears; have tears for me."

And what added to my despair was the thought that if I had remained with her, I might perhaps have been able to save her.

We buried her in the village cemetery at Romainville. The peasants carried her coffin in turns. They all loved her; she was so good. My children followed her to the tomb with my friends. As for me, I was alone in my room, still wondering if indeed my Eliza had left me for ever.

It is now three weeks since I laid down my pen and stopped working at this book. Pardon me, reader, for look you, at seventy-six a man cannot

with impunity rest his eyes on a tomb. I was sad. I wished to recover my composure.

I had seven children by my wife. Only two lived ; a son and a daughter, Henry and Caroline.

Of Caroline I will say but one word, which sums up all the praises I might bestow upon her. She has rejected ten offers of marriage, because she did not wish to leave me in my old age in the hands of strangers.

Of Henry, who has, as a man, always acted towards me, as a loving, respectful and devoted son, and of whom, as a novelist, I will say, that I reserve it to myself to speak of him at length in the chapter in which I shall deal, from my point of view, with the good and bad qualities of the writers of our age. For after all, I suppose, Paul de Kock is not forbidden to say of Henry de Kock,—because Henry de Kock is his son—what he thinks of his talent, good and bad, and good rather than bad, let me say so at once, without any shame.

One thing is certain, and that is that my son owes his reputation to his industry and to his talent alone. His name is ‘Paul’ like my own, so he might sign : ‘Paul de Kock fils’. The publisher who bought his first novel offered him an additional forty pounds if he would use that name, but he refused.

“I may or I may not succeed,” said he, “but I won’t carry on a business, I will try to establish one for myself.”

Now as sons go to-day, perhaps more credit than one thinks is due to Henry de Kock, for having refused to be the son of his father in anything more than filial affection.

Like myself, Henry earned his first money as a commercial clerk. I was not rich enough to provide for all his wants and all his pleasures. So, whilst seeking his way in letters, he bravely took a desk in a private business called *L'Entrepôt des Douanes* or *Entrepôt des Marais*, and remained there till his pen as a novelist and dramatic author was sufficiently productive to warrant him in casting aside his pen as a quilldriver—which occurred about ten years ago.

For the rest, he was not worked to death at this *Entrepôt des Marais*. I sometimes used to go there and see him, in company with a friend, for an excellent reason. He had to keep an account of the liquids, all liquids of the first order, foreign wines of warranted authenticity, Madeira, Port, Sherry, Pakaret, Marsala, genuine Rum and Tafia.

Varin, especially, Varin the *Vaudeviliste*, used to like to come with me to the Entrepôt, to study the body of such and such an Italian or Spanish wine.

During one of these visits, Henry told us the story of something that had happened in his office. It is worth repeating, as one of the greatest poets—the greatest of all, perhaps, but that political passion slightly soils his genius—played a part in it in spite of himself.

- When goods—as is known—are delivered at the bonded stores—such as the *Entrepôt*—a form of receipt is sent with them and on this receipt is written the name of the consignee.

Well, one day in 1845 or 1846, twelve barrels of tafia (a kind of rum) sent from la Martinique—each of a capacity of 350 to 400 quarts, were sent to the stores in the Marais, accompanied by the form of receipt at the head of which was written.

“To  
M. V. Hugo,  
Paris.”

The head clerk, who prided himself on his knowledge of literature, gave a cry of delight as he read this address.

“Henry” cried he to my son. “Look here—twelve barrels of tafia sent to Victor Hugo.”

“Twelve barrels, Heavens! How many quarts?”

“Altogether—4500 quarts.”

“Four thousand five hundred quarts. Heavens! What will he do with so much rum, the great man?”

“That’s his business. My business is to inform him of his rum, and that is what I am going to do. What luck, if he comes in person to pay the duty. I am dying to know him! Oh, I’d readily give twenty francs to see him face to face.”

The letter of advice was despatched to the Place Royale, where Victor Hugo was living at that time, but, contrary to the hopes of the Hugo-worshipping head-clerk, it was not the poet who came to the

bonded warehouse, but a sort of steward who brought the money for the duty on one barrel.

And so on for about six months. On two further occasions, Victor Hugo's steward returned to fetch the tafia, but never the poet showed his face. Olympio persisted in hiding himself in the clouds.

Towards the end of the sixth month, in the month of July, after the third barrel of tafia had been delivered to the great man, a gentleman presented himself one morning at the entrepôt and addressing himself to the manager.

"Sir," said he. "I have come to pay the duty on twelve barrels of Martinique tafia, branded V. H. which were delivered at the warehouse in February last."

"Very well, sir. Your name, if you please."

"Vincent Hugo."

"Vin—cent Hugo!"

The head-clerk turned pale, a terrible thought struck him. He examines his books and the bills of shipment which Mr. Vincent Hugo lays before him. Oh Heavens! The tafia delivered to Victor Hugo is the tafia claimed by his homonym, in all but the Christian name.

Surprised at his confusion, the stranger asks.

"What is the matter. Has anything happened to my tafia?"

"No, that is to say, yes. Your address was not on the receipt, was it, sir?"

"No, they could not put it there. I do not live in

Paris and only come here for a few months every year to sell my goods."

"Oh. It's a great mishap, sir."

"What?"

"That we didn't know. If only they had put M. *Vincent Hugo* on the receipt—*Vincent* in full."

"Well?"

"Well then I should not have supposed that this rum belonged to M. Victor Hugo, the poet. You can quite understand. I saw, 'To M. V. Hugo, in Paris,' and, of course, I read it as VICTOR Hugo. And as there is not and cannot be, in Paris, in France, in Europe, in the universe, but one Victor Hugo, I advised him of the arrivel of *his* rum and..."

"He fetches it from the ware-house?"

"No sir, not all! As yet he has only cleared three barrels, about a thousand quarts."

"Well, I am very sorry for you, sir, but if you have delivered goods to M. Victor Hugo which do not belong to him, it's not he, but your firm which is responsible, and it is your firm that I shall ask to make good its error. I have the honour to wish you good morning. The business is no longer in my hands, it is in the hands of my solicitor."

M. Vincent Hugo went off, leaving the headclerk in a state of stupor and despair. And the best of it was that passing suddenly from admiration to contempt, he loudly began to accuse the poet of being the sole cause of all the trouble.

"Would any one believe it?" he shouted. "Could

any one believe it of Victor Hugo? The rum does not belong to him, and yet he coolly takes it?"

"He takes it, because you wrote to him to tell him to take it," said my son.

"I wrote to him! I wrote to him!..... But he must know that he was not expecting four thousand five hundred quarts of rum from Martinique—and consequently he had no right to receive them."

"And why not? One often receives things which one does not expect. It's obvious that Victor Hugo thought this was a present."

"A present of twelve barrels! Is it not likely?"

"At any rate this present had its charges. Victor Hugo has paid the duty on the three barrels which he has cleared."

"The duty, a hundred francs on each barrel. That's a fine lot. And I just ask you what has he been able to do with a thousand quarts of rum in six months. He can't have drunk a thousand quarts of rum in six months, I'll be hanged if he can."

"Oh, as to that I can say nothing."

"But he'll have to say it, he will. He'll be forced to say it. And you'll see that he will be sentenced by the Courts to return the goods of which he illegally took possession, or to pay their value."

"Oh, I think you are making a mistake there."

He was making a mistake, as it turned out. The action which M. Vincent Hugo had threatened, was brought against the office and was tried in the Commercial Court. Victor Hugo having estab-

lished his absolute bona fides, by stating that he had taken this quantity of rum to be one of the more or less magnificent presents, which were sent him every day from all parts of the world by admirers of his genius, was discharged from the case, and the Company of the *Entrepôt des Marais*, as sole defendant, was condemned to pay M. Vincent Hugo the value of the three barrels which had been wrongly delivered.

"Well, after all," said the head-clerk, who had been severely rapped over the fingers by the board, after this judgment had been delivered. "What I should like to know is, what this fellow Victor Hugo can have done with a thousand or eleven hundred quarts of rum in six months."

"He stated it in court. He swopped it with his wine-merchant for claret and burgundy."

"Swopped it, did he? But he's no poet at all, this poet..... he's a dealer, a grocer. A man sends him a present—at least he thinks it's one—and he swops it."

And shaking with vexation, like a fox who has left his tail behind in a trap, the quill-driver concluded:

"All the same, you won't find me again running after great men—fancying them in everything. It's too expensive."

To return to Romainville, my Abbotsford number 2, which was very sad and very empty for my children and myself, after the death of their mother,

my wife. During the summer of 1843 we received nobody there.

But all grief is assuaged. And it is one of God's kindly dispensations, that our most poignant regrets transform themselves into a memory whose very bitterness is not without sweetness. Joy returned in 1844, together with the sun. In 1845, I bought a part of the wood which lay opposite my villa, on the castle side. Two acres. And it was not only with a view of extending my estate, that I decided on this purchase. The Romainville wood was decreasing year by year, parcelled out into building lots, and seemed likely soon to be wiped out altogether, and I was anxious to preserve a piece of it at least for myself. I walked in my wood, and then, as walking there one evening, Benjamin Antier said to me :

"All that's now wanting in your domain, Marquis of Carabas, is a theatre."

"It will soon be lacking no more," said I. A month later, my theatre had been built in the middle of the wood. It was a theatre the like of which is rarely seen. Yet like any other theatre, it had a stage, wings, footlights, and scenery. But it was in the part for the audience that it differed from ordinary theatres. The part for the audience was a clearing in the wood. The public seated itself on the green sward, under the trees ; the ladies alone had a right to chairs. My children and my friends were the actors ; I was the orchestra. I

played the violin for dramas, the piano for comedies and vaudevilles.

There was à play three or four times in the season at Romainville. We played *La Forêt périlleuse* and *Rodéric et Cunégonde*, in an amazing manner, I dare to say it. In *La Forêt périlleuse* notably, Grassot had a large success in the part of a postman, improvised by himself, bringing a letter into the cave to the ferocious brigand chief. We played *Estelle ou le Père et la Fille*, from the Gymnase, in a way which I would certainly defy the actors of the Gymnase to imitate. They may take this statement which way they like. We played operettas, *opérettes* which would have made the Bouffes-Parisiens and the Variétés water in the mouth. And we had singers too, to sing in our operettas. Léon Achard (let him not deny it), Léon Achard, one of the first tenors of the present day, made his débuts at the theatre of Romainville.

All the people of the village, seated on the walls which enclosed my wood, watched these really extraordinary performances, with eager astonishment. Why, if I had wanted to sell tickets for seats to the rich people in the district, I could often have taken splendid sums. In 1854, an Englishman wrote to me and offered me £ 8 for a box. I answered that I could not reserve him a box, for there was none, but that if he knew how to climb, there was the stout branch of a chestnut-tree at his disposal.

After the play, there was a dance in the drawing-

room, or on the lawn in the garden when the weather was too hot. Then, as day was breaking, there was supper, or—seeing the hour—breakfast, in the arbour. The ladies sat down to table first, and were waited on by the gentlemen; and then the gentlemen, who also were often waited on by the ladies. We laughed at the play, we laughed during the ball, and we laughed at supper, and we went on laughing after the supper, and often fell to dancing again and kept it up till noon, when we separated, still laughing at the hope of meeting again for a similar jollification, as soon as possible.

Would you like me to give the names of the people who used to be *habitués* at my house in Romainville, during a period of fifteen years?

They were:

Henry Monnier, Hippolyte Cogniard, Benjamin Antier, Barrière, Charles Desnoyers; Meyer, at that time manager of the Gaîté theatre; Mourier, manager of the Folies-Dramatiques; Villeneuve, the vaudevillist; Siraudin, Varin, Boyer; Metzmacher and Nargeot, the engravers; Fontaine, from the Sèvres' porcelain factory; Court, Barrias, Regnier, Eustache Lorsay, Worms, Belin; Devoir, the scene-painter, who painted the scenery for my theatre; Mène, the sculptor; Guennepin, the architect; Cazelles, deputy of the Hérault department; Count de Rougrave, Captain de Bernard de Seigneurens, Doctor Benoit; Charlieu, Hippolyte Souverain; Alexandre Cadot, Sartorius; Hervé, the musician;

Achard senior and Léon Achard, Sainville, Ravel, Alcide Tousez, Grassot, Lhéritier, Laferrière, fat Laurent, Vollet and Joucault.

Joucault was nothing but a *rentier*, but a *rentier* who had the glory of being a friend of Rossini's. It was he who procured me the honour of a visit from the illustrious *maestro*, a visit, which, you may be sure, I was very glad to return. Rossini wanted to see Paul de Kock, Paul de Kock wanted to see Rossini; they met twice at each other's houses, and each time embraced each other most heartily.

Charles Monselet, the witty writer, has often sat down to my table at my Abbotsford; but he has never seen it in the splendour of its amusing *fêtes*, and had he wished to do so, it would have been impossible, for, alas!, there are no more *fêtes* at my house now-a-days.

It is not my fault. It's the fault of old age, of illness. My character has not changed. I should be just as happy now, as I was formerly, to see happy faces around me, but..... but I'm seventy-six years old. I might almost say the seventy-seven, for my birthday is close at hand..... and I have got the gout. At seventy-seven, with the gout, Roger Bontemps himself would have given up spending his nights in drinking, dancing, playing, eating and laughing.....

Well, well, if old age has forced me to be steady, I remember that it was not always so, and that is in itself a pleasure.....

# Death of Charles Paul de Kock

A NOTE BY HIS SON

HENRY DE KOCK

Death prevented my illustrious and revered father from finishing his Memoirs.

He began the volume which is before us, as he has told us, in 1869, and worked at it from time to time, at his leisure, till the summer of 1870.

The political events which then took place, upset him; and whom did they not upset in France, during that fatal period? What French writer would have had the courage to work, at a time when the fatherland, having madly entered upon a terrible struggle, seemed, day by day, nearer to its final downfall?

During the siege, a private sorrow was added to the anxiety which my father felt for the destinies of France. He heard that his place at Romainville had, so to speak, ceased to exist. The wood, cut down in part for fuel by the troops, had been afterwards levelled by a gang of miserable marauders

and thieves, and the house had been pillaged and sacked.

We know what took place, after the war with the Prussians was finished. A new war broke out, more terrible than the first. A fratricidal war. A war of Frenchmen against Frenchmen.

During the two months in which the execrable Commune lasted, my father never once left his apartment. I used often to go and see him. He used to spend his days seated in his armchair, near his window, motionless, silent and sad. He, sad! That showed how much he was suffering.

When fighting began in the street, my sister begged him in vain to seek refuge with her in some safer part of the town.

"Where do you want to go?" he answered  
"People are being killed everywhere."

The Porte-Saint-Martin theatre was in flames, a few paces off. Turning a deaf ear to all entreaties, he stretched himself out on his bed, which was in a room lighted up by the glare of the fire without, and said. "I may as well die here."

But he did not die yet. The bullets and the flames spared him, but he could not long resist the strength of such emotions, such sorrows.

The month of June passed by. Order appeared to be re-established. He wished to go to Romainville.

"Don't go this year," said I.

"Why not?"

"Because you are not strong enough to stand the

sight of your disasters."

"I am a philosopher, as you know."

"And besides, there are Prussians still at Romainville."

"Well, aren't the Prussians worth more than these bandits of the Commune?"

He went. I cried when I saw our poor little wood levelled to the ground.

"Bah," said he with a piteous smile. "That'll all grow again."

He brought furniture to his house, to replace the furniture that had been stolen—and it had all been stolen; he set workmen to repair the doors and the casements which had been burnt, and gardeners to plant trees and flowers in the garden. And carpenters, locksmiths, house-painters, masons and gardeners, he urged them on all day long to make haste over their work, as though he felt sure that he would see it finished.

Indeed, towards the middle of August, his strength visibly gave way. It was long since he had lost his appetite and could not sleep at nights. He would not hear of a doctor. He did not like doctors. Soon his state got so bad, that my sister insisted on his return to Paris. As soon as I heard of this, I hastened to his bedside. He recognized me, for he pressed my hand, but he was unable to speak to me. I had brought with me Doctor Gueneau de Mussy, one of the princes of science. I shall never forget the pathetic accent with which the

celebrated physician said to me, having drawn me aside. "Oh, sir, you are to be very unhappy. But nothing can be done, nothing can be done. Your father is dying."

He died on Tuesday, August 29th, 1871, at ten o'clock in the evening. Fifty years before, day for day, he had slept for the first time in this apartment, in this very room in which he breathed his last.

My father, as you have read, belonged to the Reformed Church, but he had brought my sister and myself up as Catholics, thinking it more seemly that his children should belong to the church which predominates in France.

At my request, a pastor came to pray over the body of my illustrious and revered father, and accompanied his mortal remains to the cemetery.

And on this occasion, a religious newspaper, *L'Univers*—joked. Yes, joked! At a time when the whole press, of all shades of opinion, was unanimous in expressions of regret, a writer in *L'Univers*, who, it is true, had not the courage to sign an article which was as stupid as it was infamous, had the audacity to say:

"One would like to know what a minister of the pure Gospel can have found to say about Paul de Kock."

That is stupid, anonymous sir, because you, who make a trade of religion, you ought to have known that a Protestant pastor, standing over a tomb, does not speak of the body which it contains, but

of God, of God, just and good, to whom, those who remain behind must go for comfort in their affliction.

It is infamous, because nothing either in the life or in the work of my illustrious and revered father warranted you in doubting that good could be said of him in the tomb. His good may be resumed as follows :

“He was the most honest of men.”

“He was the best of fathers.”

“He was one of the most fertile, most charming of contemporary novelists, one of those, also, whose name will never die.”

Paul de Kock is buried in the cemetery of Les Lilas, which was formerly the Romainville wood. Both my sisters and I wished our dear father to rest in the land which was so dear to him. The Commune of Les Lilas insisted, as an honour, in taking upon itself the maintenance for ever of Paul de Kock’s tomb, and we accepted this offer with gratitude, as a last and touching homage paid by the people to the people’s great writer.

HENRY DE KOCK

THE END











